

WRITING POLITICS IN IMPERIAL ROME



Edited by
W.J. Dominik,
J. Garthwaite & P.A. Roche

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PREFACE

Writing politics is fundamental to the concerns of Roman imperial literature. This volume sets out to explore the varying strategies, techniques, dynamics, and concerns of Roman writers who lived between the 50s BCE and 120 CE. In order to contextualize our focus upon the early imperial period, studies of some important precursors from the republican period are included. The overall result is a project that concerns itself with a wide range of genres and literatures including many of the major works of the early imperial period. The first chapter not only establishes the context and parameters of the book but also lays out the content and *modus operandi* of the chapters on individual authors, including a discussion of the strategies and techniques examined, while the second chapter discusses the social and political background of the late republican and early imperial periods. The rest of the chapters consider the works of individual authors whose collective body of literature spanned almost two hundred years and witnessed three full-scale civil wars and the rule of a dictator, a board of triumvirs, and fourteen emperors. This literature was composed in both Latin and Greek by authors who represent a wide variety of viewpoints on and proximities to the arbiters of power. It was created in differing political systems, changing social climates, and evolving literary contexts.

Our concern throughout *Writing Politics in Imperial Rome* has been to apply a more inclusive definition of “politics” to the literature under consideration not only in order to keep the reductive polarities of “pro-” and “anti-” from hijacking the conversation we wish to promote but also to reflect modern critical approaches more accurately than has sometimes been the case in studies of the political literature of classical antiquity. Indeed it should be apparent from the various contributions that authors have had the freedom to discuss political issues from their own particular vantage points. We hope that by the application of a wide variety of critically informed viewpoints this book will offer to its varied readership—scholars, students and the general reader alike—an overview of the nature of political expression in literature at Rome. An additional, natural aim has been to offer new perspectives on individual authors of the late republic and especially the early empire. All Greek and Latin passages have been translated to make the volume accessible to a wide readership.

We express our warm gratitude to a number of people and institutions for their help in the production of this volume. To all our contributors we offer our sincere thanks for their patience, good humor, and care during its long production. To Kyle Gervais we are indebted for his hard work in compiling the General Index. We are also extremely grateful to the staff at Brill, namely Michiel Klein Swormink, Irene van Rossum, Caroline van Erp and Ellen Girmscheid, for their unflagging patience and impeccable professionalism. We also express our appreciation to the University of Otago and its Division of Humanities for the award of grants that assisted us in the completion of this book.

Dunedin, New Zealand
Sydney, Australia
March 2009

William J. Dominik
John Garthwaite
Paul Roche

TEXTS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Ancient Works and Authors

The titles of ancient works are generally cited in Latin, occasionally in English or Greek (with an English translation).

Abbreviations of ancient authors and works are mainly those listed in the following works:

Hornblower, S. and Spawforth, A. (eds) (1996) *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*. 3rd edn. Oxford.

Hammond, N. G. L. and Scullard, H. H. (eds) (1970) *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*. 2nd edn. Oxford.

Souter, A., Wyllie, J. M., Glare, P. G. W. et al. (eds) (1968–82) *Oxford Latin Dictionary*. Oxford.

Liddell, H. G., Scott, R. and Jones, H. S. (eds) (1940) *A Greek-English Lexicon*. 9th edn. Oxford.

Modern Works

References to modern works in the chapters of this volume appear by scholarly surname, year and page references. References to scholars by name and page references only are to their chapters in this volume.

A Note on the Greek and Latin Texts

The Greek and Latin texts used in each chapter are indicated in the notes or are the standard texts. The Latin consonantal ‘v’ and ‘j’ have been printed as ‘u’ and ‘i’ throughout, while ‘U’ appears as ‘V’.

CHAPTER ONE

WRITING IMPERIAL POLITICS: THE CONTEXT

William J. Dominik, John Garthwaite and Paul Roche

The essential thesis of *Writing Politics in Imperial Rome* is that political debate is a continuous, multi-dimensional, and fundamentally important aspect of the literature produced in virtually every genre and period at Rome and within the boundaries of the Roman empire. This book demonstrates and explores on a relatively large scale the strategies of political communication found in Latin and Greek literature at Rome in the period extending from the 50s BCE to approximately 120 CE. The editorial burden of periodization is, of course, arbitrary and somewhat odious: the collection could easily have attempted a beginning with the fragments of early Latin and progressed to the limits of antiquity. Thus a tendentious political history of political discourse in Latin literature could have been attempted, though at the expense of making an already large survey unmanageably diffuse. The literary output from Lucretius to Suetonius offers a continuous sequence of largely preserved texts that helped to determine the temporal limits observed in this volume. Geographical restrictions have also been observed. The texts under examination here are almost exclusively urban productions, and often self-consciously so. Likewise, some broader generic restrictions have imposed themselves: no epigraphy, *senatus consulta*, imperial edicts or imperial speeches have found inclusion. This last restriction has largely determined the broad point of view of the volume. The texts under examination are reactive: they respond to, question, reframe, and re-examine the flow of information stemming from the dominant political individuals and structures of their day, but they do not generally (with the possible exception of Seneca) attempt to debate, determine or construct ideology except in a reactionary mode. After this process of reduction, what remains is a sequence of discussions that commence with broad contextual considerations. These discussions examine the strategies, techniques, and *topoi* of political communication that were adopted by individual authors from the age of Caesar to that of Hadrian, a span of almost two centuries. They take

their start from a period of profound political crisis at the end of the republic, proceed through the sequence of Julio-Claudian and Flavian emperors and conclude in a period of relative (and ostensible) calm in a sequence of emperors traditionally determined to be “good.” The picture that emerges from this overview is of a generalized discourse, a language of political commentary employed by imperial writers and their republican precursors, in which the dominant political concerns of the day could find expression. The basic elements and fluid techniques of this political discourse were adapted from author to author and generation to generation during the empire.

One aspect that emerges from the outset of this volume is the catholic definition of the term “politics” adopted in the various discussions. A variety of approaches find consideration in this book and reflection on the terms of reference has naturally been a factor in many chapters (see especially Rutledge, ch. 2; Roller, ch. 7; Williams, ch. 9). The term “politics” has been taken in one or more of its traditional senses as pertaining to the actions and policies of a particular government (Wilson, ch. 8; Mason, ch. 14; Roche, ch. 16; Garthwaite, ch. 18; Rutledge, ch. 19), as relevant to debate regarding actual and ideal constitutions (Mason, ch. 14), as encompassing the notions of imperial succession (Mason, ch. 14; Konstan, ch. 20) and free expression (Rutledge, ch. 2; Hall, ch. 4; Jennings, ch. 10; Ker, ch. 11), and as public discussion of the virtues, *mores*, and values of individuals (Penwill, ch. 3; Jennings, ch. 10; Garthwaite and Martin, ch. 13; Konstan, ch. 20; Winkler, ch. 21). At other points the scope of the term has been widened to include concepts of aristocratic competition and the arenas in which it took place (Roller, ch. 7), concepts of ethics and moralizing discourses (Malamud, ch. 12), and socio-cultural constructions of history (Zissos, ch. 15). Elsewhere the term has expanded further to consider the notions of “Romanness” and otherness (Williams, ch. 9; Zissos, ch. 15), of insiders and outsiders (Ker, ch. 11), the geopolitical implications of landscape and geography (Dominik, ch. 5), and socio-political commentary (Malamud, ch. 12). Another dimension of political writing emerges in the texts themselves, in the production of literature as itself a political act, specifically as an object or agent of politically and ideologically charged representation (Wilson, ch. 8; Williams, ch. 9; Ker, ch. 11), of socio-political literary criticism (Newlands, ch. 17), and of resistance to the ideas and values of a specific regime (Wilson, ch. 8). The self-conscious self-representation of Roman authors as “subjects” (in the political sense) lurks behind the discussions of the various texts, yet the imperial

governments to which they were subjected and to which they reacted were as mutable as the texts and people that described them.¹

Likewise the concept of what constitutes “writing politics”—as in these chapters (we contend), so in Roman antiquity—meets with various definitions and encompasses an extensive variety of strategies of communication. Consider the breadth of strategies and terms under discussion in the following chapters: allusion and intertextuality (Penwill, ch. 3; Dominik, ch. 5; Garthwaite and Martin, ch. 13); exemplarity, both historical and philosophical (Penwill, ch. 3; Ker, ch. 11; Mason, ch. 14; Winkler, ch. 21); silence and (publically enacted) self-censorship (Hall, ch. 4); aristocratic courtesy and polite fiction (Hall, ch. 4); open meditation upon compliance and dissent (Bond, ch. 6); the trumping of ephemeral power by the permanent literary monument (Dominik, ch. 5; Bond, ch. 6; Williams, ch. 9); the politics of geography and landscape (Dominik, ch. 5; Ker, ch. 11; Zissos, ch. 15); the redefinition of arenas of public *uirtus* and debate regarding the rules of public competition (Roller, ch. 7); euphemism, paradox, irony, cryptic utterance, and satire (Hall, ch. 4; Williams, ch. 9; Ker, ch. 11; Rutledge, ch. 19; Winkler, ch. 21); covert criticism, ambiguity, innuendo, and figured speech (Penwill, ch. 3; Jennings, ch. 10; Roche, ch. 16; Rutledge, ch. 19); the protection or immunity offered by the hierarchy of genres (Wilson, ch. 8; Jennings, ch. 10; Garthwaite, ch. 18); choice of addressee (Ker, ch. 11); the politics of rhetoric (Ker, ch. 11; Roche, ch. 16); the politics of elegy involving *querimonia*, *recusatio*, literary patronage, and “programmatic” text (Wilson, ch. 8); the construction of the historical past (Ker, ch. 11; Mason, ch. 14; Zissos, ch. 15; Rutledge, ch. 19); the re-construction of mythical ages (Malamud, ch. 12; Zissos, ch. 15); the politics of physiognomy (Ker, ch. 11); the re-definition of primitivism and sophistication (Malamud, ch. 12); the politics of literary definition (Newlands, ch. 17); and notions of authority and control, especially control of information (Konstan, ch. 20).

The strategies adopted clearly are as multifarious as the agendas of their authors. It is common for literary critics to examine the position of modern writers, for example, in Africa, whose works, especially classically derived drama, deal with a range of political issues and have been

¹ See, for example, the discussions of Roller, pp. 153–72; Williams, pp. 203–24; and Malamud, pp. 273–306 in this volume and Feeney (1992) 1–25; Kennedy (1992) 26–58.

produced under regimes that have attempted to control or even repress literature that seems to constitute disapproval and even opposition to the prevailing power structures.² Elsewhere the techniques employed by writers in the former Soviet Union to cope with and occasionally undermine a watchful censorship are now a matter of record. Here the political climate spawned a breed of authors skilled in doublespeak, simultaneously apparently honoring official expectations yet allowing the possibility of a dissenting evaluation.³ When writing about literature of the Roman imperial period, however, some classical scholars have attempted to play down or even reject the notion that writers could have been commenting critically upon the prevailing power structures in a similar way as their modern counterparts. It was suggested over a quarter of a century ago that the social and political mood of the 1960s had an important role in the formulation of more “pessimistic” readings of Vergil’s *Aeneid*.⁴ And recently it was asserted that the liberal mood of the latter years of the twentieth century was responsible for the “subversive” interpretation of Statius’ *Silvae*; at the same time the term “revisionist” was imputed to readings of Statius’ *Thebaid* that are politically unfavorable toward the principate and it was suggested that one of these interpretations constituted in the mind of its proponent a politically direct challenge to the Flavian regime.⁵ Contributors to this volume prudently—and therefore infrequently—use the term “subversive” and its verbal form, and there is no one who approaches a text as an explicit challenge to a particular regime. Although in many respects the political stance advertised by a text in relation to the emperor under whom it was published is one of the most important hermeneutic issues confronting the critic, we do not think that a political reading precludes the interpretive possibilities of the literature under consideration. While we believe that the studies in this volume collectively refute the straw-man approach to the political reading of Roman literature, we do not suggest in turn that it is acceptable simply to retroject a modern political mindset upon the discussion of Roman literature or to assume that any particular strategy necessarily mirrored that of their modern counterparts. Rather, we maintain that in the first instance the literature of the late republican and early imperial periods should be examined

² See Dominik (2007a) 117–31, esp. 117–25; Dominik (2007b) 93–113.

³ Milosz (1953); Brown (1982); for a definition of doublespeak see Bartsch (1994) 115.

⁴ Stahl (1981) 157.

⁵ Coleman (2003b) 13–14; Coleman (2003c) 10–11; *contra* Dominik (2004) 79–80.

against the political context and ideological framework that produced it; hence the importance of the next chapter in this volume on the social and political background.

In this chapter Steven Rutledge provides a framework for considering the notion of free expression in the early imperial period.⁶ Many scholars have assumed that free speech ceased to exist with the end (or even the last years) of the Roman republic and view the principate as a repressive period. While some scholars have partially disputed this perception, few have examined extensively the limits of free expression under the empire. Rutledge starts by considering the difficulties in our comprehension of concepts that underlie freedom of expression in Roman antiquity by looking specifically not only at how we understand the concept of *libertas* and the types of expression it protected but also the concept of repression and how the Romans understood and enforced it. He argues that a major hindrance for our understanding of this phenomenon is the nature of our sources. Many of these, when not highly rhetorical, are often vague and schematic in their discussions of the individual instances of censorship. In terms of actual cases of censorship, it appears that status and social or political context were key factors in determining how the spoken and written word was received and whether an individual suffered for using it. High status and political connections as was the case in the republic generally granted the individual greater freedom to express himself, and dissenting opinions among the elite infrequently resulted in dire consequences. Our sources indicate that historical and biographical writing carried more danger, though many of our cases are problematic. Abuse, on the other hand, unless anonymous, was rarely tolerated when turned against men of standing by their inferiors. It is in this light that similar abuses by senators and equestrians against the *princeps* should be understood. The regulation of expression in Rome was something that was ultimately both social and political, and such regulation aimed to protect the ruling elite's *dignitas* and thereby its legitimacy, authority, and power. Rutledge's chapter offers considerable context for the social phenomenon informing the political act of literary suppression in the early imperial period. His conclusions point to the notion that the image of the Roman emperor as an unchanging and aggressive censor of free speech may be more extreme and less nuanced than the evidence suggests. Instead, in the

⁶ Rutledge, pp. 23–61.

political reality of the early Roman empire, a fluid nexus of factors such as class, status, and context may have informed the decision to curtail free speech among the aristocracy. And yet the literature of the period reflects an abiding concern with this possibility. If social factors informed the repression of free speech at Rome—if actual instances of repression fluctuated in frequency with the disposition of the emperor and the class and context of each utterance—this appears not to have neutralized the specter of repression as a powerful *topos* in the literature of the early empire. It was clearly a phenomenon that lived on in the minds of authors in this period, and authors assumed that the topic would find ready reception in their audiences.

The use of various strategies for writing politics in imperial Rome were already evident in the late republican period, as the next chapters by John Penwill and Jon Hall demonstrate. It is in the abovementioned literary context that Penwill examines the political nuances at work in the disparity between the way of life advocated in Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* and that lived by the leading politicians of the 50s BCE.⁷ His *Gravius homo*, the *triumphator* whose victory encompasses the entire universe and whose spoils are peace of mind, stands in pointed contrast with the culture of imperialism prevalent in the period of the first triumvirate. Lucretius' hymn to the fructifying Venus *genetrix* in the prologue sets up an oppositional alternative to the Venus *victrix* of those dynasts who sought advancement through military conquest. This choice of Venus is politically acute: Pompey's theatre, financed out of the spoils of his eastern campaigns, featured a temple of Venus, while Caesar claimed Venus for his ancestor. Lucretius also makes specific political references in his poem to Pompey's triumph of 61 BCE, to the opening of his theatre in 55, and to Caesar's own Gallic commentaries. Significant too is Lucretius' choice to address the poem to a significant player in triumviral politics with whom he constructs a teacher-student relationship. The politician talks glibly about "being there for the common good" (*nec...communi desse saluti*, *DRN* 1.42–3), but it is the epicurean who genuinely has the "common good" at heart. Penwill's Lucretius presents himself as a new teacher for Rome, a poet to supersede Ennius, whose ennobling transformation of Rome's expansionist history into Homeric epic had underpinned the ideology of conquest espoused by the triumvirs and their acolytes.

⁷ Penwill, pp. 63–87.

Julius Caesar's dictatorship from 46 and 44 BCE represents in many respects a forerunner of the imperial principate. For senators such as Cicero, long steeped in the Republican traditions of vigorous, confrontational debate in the senate house, the consequences were considerable. Political views now had to be expressed more obliquely; indeed Cicero himself seems to have refrained entirely from contributing to senatorial debate for several months. Jon Hall discusses some of the ways in which Cicero and his contemporaries reacted to these pressures that arose with Caesar's autocracy.⁸ His discussion focuses on five topics: the complaints of A. Caecina (*Fam.* 6.7; SB 237) on the constraints on freedom of speech (and literary composition) under Caesar's dictatorship; Cicero's composition of his treatise *Brutus* and his eulogy of Cato following the latter's suicide at Utica; his efforts to write an open letter of political advice to Caesar; his praise of Caesar in *Pro Marcello*; and his depictions of the political conflicts in the recent civil war. Hall underscores the role played by aristocratic courtesy, *praeteritio*, polite fictions, and euphemism in Cicero's attempts to voice his resentment at the dictatorship in way that does not cause offence. Cicero's reaction to autocracy was complex: he compromised his political ideals in several important ways and learned to "serve the times"; and yet on occasions—and without deploying the techniques of figured speech that would become a fixed feature of the imperial political landscape—he also engaged in minor acts of political resistance.

The rest of the book examines writers of the early imperial period. Vergil is seminal for any discussion of the political in imperial literature. William Dominik's chapter on Vergil examines the concept of "geopolitics," which he refers to generally as constituting the relationship between political and geographical features of the text.⁹ Maintaining that "green politics" function as an essential component of the Vergilian narrative, Dominik asserts that political events frequently are treated in terms of the physical world in which they occur. The focus upon the natural environment reveals its vulnerability to the politico-military and urban worlds and the sympathy of the narrator for the environment and its denizens. The conflict that arises in all three poems is attributable to the attempts of man to establish hegemony over the landscape. Through a holistic and intertextual reading of the "book" of Vergil—the

⁸ Hall, pp. 89–110.

⁹ Dominik, pp. 111–32.

Eclogues, *Georgics*, and the *Aeneid*—a picture of the natural world emerges in which the “forces of history” and the poet’s sympathetic response to the victims of Rome’s imperial past are emphasized over the “political teleology” of the individual poems.

Robin Bond’s chapter isolates a problem confronting the poetic spirit at a time of supposed rejoicing and victory when the poet cannot bring himself totally to fall in with the national mood of optimism or totally admire the victors.¹⁰ Prior to Actium and even afterwards in the *Epodes* and in the first book of the *Satires*, Bond argues that Horace reflects precisely such a tension. He was at once the client of Maecenas and a member of the losing side in the civil war; he demonstrated both horror at the process of civil war (if not of its outcome) and an awareness of the difficulties of finding an appropriate *modus uiuendi* in the post-civil war period. As Bond’s Horace became more established as a poet of the regime, as he continues the *Satires* into their second book and published the first three books of *Odes*, he becomes more independent and comfortable with his role. This may have been because he was permitted to criticize and advise his contemporaries and friends on how to survive and succeed in difficult times; or it may be that he simply assumed the freedom to do so, a freedom he resumes in the *Epistles*. Bond argues that the fourth book of *Odes* and the *Carmen Saeculare* sing a somewhat different song; that in their praise of the *princeps* they present a less ambivalent view of the Augustan age. But Bond’s Horace maintains an independence of spirit via the justifiable claim that it is through the agency of his own immortalizing poetry that the *princeps* will live forever in the consciousness of humankind.

Matthew Roller contends that the “politics” of Livy’s *Ab Urbe Condita* are best sought not in what Livy says about Augustus or the Augustan regime but in the ways that the work engages and reflects upon contemporary modes of distributing power in society.¹¹ As an instance of such engagement or reflection, Livy’s representation of Appius Claudius Caecus in books 9–10 is examined for what it contributes to the articulation of a vision of the past that engages certain concerns in the present. Specifically Livy presents Appius as an innovator who forges and legitimates a new arena of aristocratic competition, which Livy calls *artes urbanae*, and comes to be acknowledged as the outstand-

¹⁰ Bond, pp. 133–52.

¹¹ Roller, pp. 153–72.

ing practitioner of jurisprudence and eloquence in his own day. His relations with contemporary competitors, namely Fabius Rullianus, Decius Mus, and Volumnius Flamma, help to define the scope and boundaries of this new arena as against the established competitive arena of generalship and war-fighting. Livy's Appius differs strikingly from the Appius constructed by Augustus for his gallery of *summi uiri*. And this is unsurprising since Livy and Augustus needed quite different things from their exemplary ancient heroes. Livy's Appius, however, exemplifies a broader Livian interest in how the arenas of aristocratic competition experience innovation. Such an interest found resonance in Livy's own contemporary society in the 20s BCE as modes of aristocratic competition were utterly reshaped under the emerging Augustan dispensation. Indeed Livy himself can be seen as an innovator, a *domi nobilis* seeking fame and glory as a (non-senatorial) writer of history. Thus one place where the "politics" of Livy's work may be found is in the nexus of the author's personal experience, the broader social experience of contemporary aristocrats, and the projection and articulation of such experiences upon and through exemplary historical figures such as Appius Claudius Caecus.

On Horace's view that the primary concern of elegy is the expression of unhappiness and unfulfilment (*querimonia*, *AP* 75), the genre is intrinsically antithetical to the celebration of the body politic and its leaders; nevertheless Roman elegy provides a clear example of a poetic genre that is almost universally read today with at least one eye on its political dimension. Marcus Wilson argues that the elegists Tibullus and Propertius thematize the world of politics only to marginalize it by manipulating their relationship with its representatives no less than they do with the personalities of their amatory world in order to validate their own social and poetic choices.¹² Thus, just as the mistress is to some degree a literary creation, a *scripta puella*, so Maecenas (as well as Messalla) becomes a *scriptus patronus*. In this regard even Augustus is a *scriptus princeps*, relegated to serving the elegiac poet's standing with posterity in that he exemplifies the ideological pressures that the poet has successfully resisted so as to preserve the purity of his literary creation. Like the use of the term 'patron' (not to mention that of the word elegy itself), the interpretation of the *recusatio*, or poetic refusal, has sometimes been misleading. Often seen simply as a form of flattery implying the

¹² Wilson, pp. 173–202.

poet's inability to do justice to the greatness of the proposed subject, it is on a more nuanced view another affirmation of the unbridgeable gulf that separates the poet's worldview from the ruling ideology. Indeed the poet's justification of his own priorities inevitably impugns those of the public figures against whom he measures himself. This is seen nowhere more clearly than in Propertius' third book where Augustus' wars (*Arma*, 3.4.1) carry negative connotations of human fallibility and loss in contrast to the morally superior values of Propertius himself found in the world of love and the god of peace (*Pacis Amor deus*, 3.5.1). In sum, Wilson argues, political interpretations of Tibullus and Propertius wrongly assume a progressivist model by which the poets move from political independence and self-absorbed amatory involvement to a growing acknowledgement and endorsement of the new imperial order. Wilson concludes that this ignores the underlying patterns that unite all of Propertius' books; thus book 4, no less than the *Monobiblos* (book 1), reinforces the poet's determination to resist promotion of ideas irreconcilable with his social, political and literary values.

Gareth Williams takes as his lead the recently evolving re-conceptualizing of Ovid from supposedly "pro-" and "anti-" Augustan readings¹³ to views that frame him as more neutral in his politics or as a mercurial political commentator who reacts without dogmatic fixity to different shades of the Augustan phenomenon.¹⁴ Ovid captures and responds to the fluidity of Augustan discourse, an all-encompassing flux of image and representation that dominated the Roman political landscape from 30 BCE onwards. Williams traces the path of Ovid's ironic commentary on Augustan discourse from his early days as a love-elegist to his last days in exile. He emphasizes that Ovid belonged to a generation that came of age after the first effort of Augustan reconstruction had passed: his experience of Augustus differed from that of those poets who hailed him (ironically or not) as a deliverer from the carnage of previous decades. His Ovid's Augustus is a problematic combination of Rome old and new, of values modern and yet traditional. Ovid's many different modes of political engagement—whether in his oblique

¹³ See Kennedy (1992) 26–58, whose discussion is framed in oppositional terms of "Augustan" and "anti-Augustan," which because of the simple polarity of these labels naturally invites the question of why it should be necessary in the first place. Cf. Davis (2006) 9–22, who considers the use of these terms and defends the notion of "anti-Augustan" readings.

¹⁴ Williams, pp. 203–24.

response in the *Ars Amatoria* to Augustus' moral reforms or his complex construction of an 'Augustan' half-year of Roman festival celebration in the *Fasti*; whether in his seemingly transparent glorification of Augustus in the *Metamorphoses* or his deftly defiant stance in his exilic poetry—are explored through extracts to illustrate the multifarious ways in which Ovid activates his ironic and delicately nuanced phrasings. The Ovidian corpus emerges as fundamentally political, but it does not take fixed positions on so flexible a commodity as Augustan discourse. It is an elusiveness that is at one with the *leuitas* that is basic to his compositional technique and poetic mindset.

Victoria Jennings looks at a self-styled poetic innovator, Phaedrus, who re-clothes Aesop's Greek prose fables in Latin verse.¹⁵ She contends that his espousal of fable is a master stroke. Dressing the subversive speech act in the costume of fable acts as a subterfuge for overt criticism. In the Aesopic tradition fable offers an effective alternative to frank criticism, a privileged space in which invective between those in unequal power relationships (slave/master, subject/tyrant) is rendered safe. Jennings analyses the safety devices used by Phaedrus to deflect authorial culpability while he engages in criticism: the nature of fable and fable tradition; Phaedrus' emulation of Aesop; and manipulations of contemporary poetic *topoi*. Beyond this analysis, Jennings asks whether Phaedrus' devices should be read as part of a striving for fame rather than safety: does Phaedrus manufacture a sense of danger as a strategy to advance his literary renown? To what extent does his background as a Greek freedman affect his desire for memorialization? How does this strategy play off against contemporary instances of literary censorship? And to what extent is the increasing moral conservatism of his fable books significant for any consideration of successful *and* safe authorial strategies in the early principate? Roman emperors and their acolytes read with a notorious complicity, finding meaningful paradigms even where none exist. In the hostile reality of the imperial court, there are many perils for a Greek freedman who offers the idealized mask of fable as a mode of *παρρησία* ("freedom of speech"). Jennings enquires whether the poet of blame can himself escape blame; after two books of fables, we learn that Phaedrus has been prosecuted by Tiberius' enforcer, Sejanus. And so, Jennings asks, did Phaedrus' *Fables* fail?

¹⁵ Jennings, pp. 225–48.

In building up a basis for reading politics in Seneca's writings, it is imperative to take into account his "outsider-insider" relationship to the Julio-Claudian household. Since our lack of precise contextual information makes it difficult to be specific about the motives of most individual works, however, James Ker focuses upon his works' formal and sociological dimensions and explores the rhetorical possibilities Seneca utilized when writing imperial politics as well as the potential effects of these rhetorical choices upon Rome's political community.¹⁶ These issues are addressed through a survey of the specific challenges posed for writing in the early principate (threats to freedom of speech, new spaces for literary performance, a tendency toward dissimulation, a new strategic and therapeutic role for writing, and a privileging of moralizing discourse) and of some of the rhetorical paths that Seneca adopted (strategic choice of addressees, innovative use of Augustan memories and models, writing politics through physiognomy, channeling of authoritative voices, a shift of the burden of interpretation to the reader, cryptic and anonymous reference, mediation of reference through doubles, a rhetoric of geography and landscape, and the imposition of technical categories). The discussion is framed with close-readings of *De Clementia*, where Seneca anatomizes the *princeps* into *uultus* and *uox* and uses the metaphor of the mirror to invite creative cross-identifications between Nero and the body politic (and vice versa).

Martha Malamud writes on Lucan and Petronius.¹⁷ Encounters in Roman literature between a civilized Roman and a rustic host allow for a comparison to be made between the present (in terms of its degree of civilization or decadence) and the past (in terms of its virtue or primitivism). Architecture and food are both important markers of the primitive. Two scenes of primitive hospitality—Amyclas' reception of Julius Caesar in *Bellum Civile* 5.504–59 and Encolpius' misadventures with Oenothra's geese (*Satyricon* 134–8)—allow us to observe our two authors in the act of *writing politics* since the deployment of primitive imagery in Roman culture has political overtones. The juxtaposition of the rustic images of Rome's past with the urban images of her present draws attention to the discontinuity and disjuncture between these worlds and their respective Roman identities. Oenothra's squalid hovel, Amyclas' lodgings, which are neither boat nor house, and the ruins that

¹⁶ Ker, pp. 249–71.

¹⁷ Malamud, pp. 273–306.

fall from the Libyan sky all reconfigure the traditional primitive hut in pointed contrast to the spectacular building programs of Neronian Rome. Lucan's evocations of the primitive hut demonstrate nostalgia for a traditional Roman virtue that is now lost and predict Rome's likely post-imperial fate. Oenotrea's rancid diet, her filthy hovel, and the sinister eating habits of the Crotonians go beyond even Lucan: they superimpose all stages of civilization while they destroy the very possibility of a golden age for human beings.

Recent criticism of the seven eclogues of Calpurnius Siculus has focused on their date of composition. Several scholars reject the traditional Neronian date and assign the author to a much later period, sometimes as late as the third century CE. Yet John Garthwaite and Beatrice Martin argue that the most plausible dramatic date of Calpurnius' *Eclogues* remains the reign of Nero.¹⁸ Thus the principal theme of these poems on the auspicious advent of a young emperor and the revived hopes for poetry in a new golden age of peace and political goodwill warrants their inclusion in a critical survey of the relationships between literature and politics in the imperial period. The corpus of seven poems divides distinctly into two groups. *Eclogues* 2–3 and 5–6 follow a more traditional bucolic pattern by detailing the poetic and amatory rivalries of herdsmen; these poems are framed by three poems (1, 4 and 7) that self-consciously recall the political themes of Augustan verse, particularly Vergil's *Eclogues*. The mysterious discovery of a versified proclamation announcing the arrival of a golden age and a godly new Caesar inspires one of the finders, the rustic Corydon, to formulate his own version in hopes of gaining imperial attention and reward; hence Corydon's journey to Rome and his account of his experiences there to his fellow herdsmen in the final poem of the series. Although distinct in subject matter, Garthwaite and Martin reveal that both groups of eclogues show a remarkably similar change of mood as their characters, initially part of a community of simple fellowship, become increasingly at odds with each other, their environment, and themselves. The development sits uncomfortably alongside the political message of hope and harmony that is threaded through the corpus. Ultimately the reader is drawn to question the nature of the new order as represented, for example, in the image of gold that also changes in the course of the poems from a symbol of moral regeneration to a representation of

¹⁸ Garthwaite and Martin, pp. 307–22.

the material splendors of the amphitheater; the latter, as far beyond Corydon's reach as the emperor himself, serve merely to increase his sense of frustration and isolation. It is an incongruous, if not deliberately negative, postscript to the blessings seemingly promised on a universal level by the new imperial age and extrapolated from a more personal perspective by the rustic poets. Garthwaite and Martin argue that the patronage evident in the poetry of the Augustan golden age is not, on this showing at least, to be a feature of the present renaissance.

Although scholars have paid increasing attention to political, possibly subversive elements in Roman authors, Josephus has usually been left out of such considerations. Because he was a Judean client of the Flavians writing mainly about the history and culture of his homeland in Greek, the study of his works has often seemed best handled by specialists in those fields. Yet Josephus was a Roman citizen who apparently spent his entire literary career (c. 71 to after 100) in Rome. Significant stretches in his thirty extant volumes deal explicitly with Roman affairs and much of the rest seems particularly configured to address the interests of an elite Roman audience. Because Josephus otherwise shows himself adept in the contemporary modes of oblique or ironic discourse, it is worth asking about the illocutionary force of his writing in Flavian Rome. Steve Mason's chapter is one of a series in that vein.¹⁹ It takes up the story of the struggle to find a successor for King Herod (died 4 BCE) in *Bellum Judaicum* 2.1–111. In a work devoted to the war of 66 to 73 CE, this story seems to consume a disproportionate amount of space. Examination reveals, however, that it is no mere space filler: it shows clear indications of authorial intent and artistry. The *Bellum Judaicum* is in large part a meditation on the meaning of political freedom, and the succession story presses in a variety of ways the question of optimal Judean governance. Moreover, Josephus appears to be raising more general issues attending monarchy and its Achilles' heel, succession, by describing the succession hearings before Augustus and his ill-fated heir-apparent Gaius and by interspersing several evocative stories of unworthy diadem seekers. These issues were entirely relevant to audiences in Josephus' Rome toward the end of the year of the four emperors with the accession of Vespasian, a *princeps* with two natural heirs.

¹⁹ Mason, pp. 323–49.

Andrew Zissos argues that, despite the overtly Greek context of the myth and the crucial importance of Apollonius Rhodius as a narrative model, the fictional world of Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* is thoroughly and unmistakably "Romanized."²⁰ But though the preoccupation with Roman culture and history is apparent, the poem's 'politics' have proven to be a more vexed critical issue. Zissos examines how Valerius' presentation of political structures and relations between classes provides an ideologically pointed mirroring of contemporary Roman institutions and structures. In the Flavian period the view of history traditionally represented in Roman epic is placed under increasing ideological pressure. A central anxiety within elite Roman culture at this time arises from the progressive marginalization of the entrenched aristocracy and the increasing limitations placed upon it by the principate. From the very outset the *Argonautica* signals a reprocessing of the traditional mythological material to reflect contemporary aristocratic concerns by stratifying its fictive Thessalian society according to Roman conceptions: an oppressive *tyrannus* supported by the military, a resentful but enfeebled body of *patres*, and an indifferent *populus*. Valerius' poem replicates the essential power equation of the early principate in subsequent narrative domains too; as a result the *Argonautica* maintains contact with contemporary realities despite the heroes' constantly shifting geographical situation. The epic is thereby able to rehearse a variety of important imperial scenarios such as tyranny and resistance, political suicide, and dissimulation. Through these features Valerius' text outlines an oppositional perspective that engages with the dominant value systems of the principate.

Paul Roche considers the extent to which Quintilian's *uera laus* ("true praise," 3.7.15) of Domitian in the *Institutio Oratoria* can be read as embodying ironic or satirical responses to Domitian's public imagery.²¹ In book three of his treatise, Quintilian himself provides step-by-step instructions in the assembly of *encomia* for the living and the dead. Since Quintilian's praise of Domitian sits awkwardly against the backdrop of this advice, his own codifying of figures and tropes offers a valuable interpretive lens through which to view his comments about the emperor. A number of linguistic tropes from elsewhere in the *Institutio*

²⁰ Zissos, pp. 351–66.

²¹ Roche, pp. 367–85.

Oratoria, including hyperbole, *simulation*, *emphasis*, and its close relative, *schema*, suggest a potential disjunction of the surface and latent meanings of Quintilian's praise. Roche focuses on the relevance of Quintilian's assessment of Domitian's talents to foreign and domestic policy in the 80s and 90s. He argues that a number of policy decisions and aspects of Domitian's personal intellect and disposition praised by Quintilian are subjected to the reader's attention in a manner that allows for ironic, satirical, and critical nuances to obtain. As Quintilian turns in sequence to Domitian's love of learning, his poetic production, his *pietas*, his status as the *sanctissimus censor* ("most sacred censor," 4 *praef.* 3), his eloquence, and his ability to wage wars (provocatively hung in the balance with his ability to write poetry), the facts and contemporary reception of Domitian's principate are read as conspiring against Quintilian's ostensible intent to celebrate his emperor. Quintilian's reader is drawn into a web of allusions to rumors, allegations, and criticisms about Domitianic policy. The very nature of the figures employed by the rhetorician guarantees that any subversive element in his praise cannot be unequivocally uncovered or categorized by third parties, but this is their very point and power.

The nature of Statius's *Thebaid*'s relationship to imperial politics has been a matter of considerable scholarly controversy. Carole Newlands mounts the case that a productive approach to this controversy is offered in the same poet's *Silvae*, which she reads as extending significant hermeneutic guidance for their author's epic poems through their reflections on the *Thebaid* and *Achilleid*.²² The *Silvae* are thus an important forum for self-conscious literary criticism. In the *Silvae* Statius frames his discussion of the *Thebaid* in terms of a tragic work of important political and cultural criticism composed at the cost of great personal anguish. The *Silvae* themselves emerge as a therapeutic activity that allows Statius to reaffirm the moral and cultural values that are collapsed in his epic. These occasional poems, however, are far from escapism. In her examination of three poems in particular—*Silvae* 1.5, 3.2, and 3.5—Newlands argues that the question of whether imperial poetry can have a meaningful political role is one that Statius importantly confronts in the *Silvae* with respect to both his occasional poetry and his *Thebaid*. Indeed his epic provides for the *Silvae* an important political as well as literary discourse.

²² Newlands, pp. 387–404.

Modern readers are skeptical about the reliability of the personal views and biographical details that classical poets, especially the satirists, claim as their own. In his chapter, John Garthwaite argues that this applies equally to Martial despite the volume of information the poet provides about himself.²³ Certainly, the *persona* Martial offers in the epigrams seems to vary according to the changing dramatic needs of the moment not only in economic and social status but also in personal outlook. Many of his addressees, including the emperor, are similarly manipulated in situations more imagined than real. Consequently much recent scholarship views the poems, especially the imperial epigrams, as essentially abstract in both setting and sentiment. On this reading issues of sincerity, perhaps even in matters panegyric, do not arise. Garthwaite agrees that the relationship between the poet-*persona* and his “epigrammatic Caesar” is governed by *lusus* (“game playing”) and comic flippancy. Yet the actual Martial cannot be removed totally from his poetic corpus. We do catch an occasional glimpse, however fleetingly, of the authorial first person in terms of personal circumstance and opinions behind the many masks. The theater of mime from which Martial expressly draws inspiration was a medium for farce and entertaining obscenity rather than serious reflection. Its leading actor, the *derisor* (“mockers”), could go from cunning upstart, derisively belittling his social superiors, to comic victim in much the same role reversal as our poet-*persona* presents of himself. But despite its predominant absurdity and amorality, the mimic stage still offered social criticism and political commentary to an audience alive to every topical nuance and innuendo. The imperial epigrams likewise present an entertainingly fictionalized drama between two characters called Martial and Caesar. Yet Garthwaite argues that for all their witty gamesmanship and ostensible flippancy some of these poems also bear traces of genuine sentiment—critical rather than laudatory—toward their imperial addressee.

Few authors were as aware of the instability of words, text, and the meaning of both as was Tacitus. Yet the texts of Tacitus—and of Pliny—are set in firmly established genres, each with their own demands; all of these texts are by nature political and all comment, through a variety of methods on the politics of the day. For Tacitus and Pliny the very genres in which they work and the choice of

²³ Garthwaite, pp. 405–27.

subjects in them constitute political commentary. Both Tacitus and Pliny recognized this and further understood the hazards especially of historical writing with the possibilities it offered for nefarious interpretation. Roman reading practices invited readers to draw parallels and comparisons between the past and the present; indeed a close reading of both Tacitus and Pliny indicate that such reading practices were necessary for political survival under the principate. Ambiguity, double speak, innuendo, “parallel” history—all were part of a rhetorical methodology that allowed Romans to “think aloud” about politics. Such reading practices influence how we interpret Tacitus’ view of the present. To illustrate this point, Steven Rutledge examines in particular the *Agricola*’s opening chapters in order to consider one possibility of how Tacitus’ text responds to current events; he then turns to Pliny.²⁴ The treatment in Pliny’s epistles of the current political situation (as well as the subject matter of his letters in general) reads as an ambiguous—if not negative—statement concerning Roman politics after Domitian. What these readings of Tacitus and Pliny illustrate is a paradox: the abiding demands of the genres in which they worked, which give the text “stability” in terms of expectation, have been upset by the displacement into a different political milieu.

David Konstan examines in detail an episode in Suetonius’ *Vita Divi Titi* (9) that recounts Titus’ generosity toward two would-be assassins.²⁵ He contends that this is paradigmatic of how Suetonius invites his own reader to surmise the ways in which politics continues to be played out in the imperial court via the control of information and the techniques of interpretation. In particular the emperor and his opponents contended over access to divination and astrology: even as successive emperors consulted professional diviners, they restricted or prohibited their activities and sometimes banished them from the city of Rome. While belief in predestination served to guarantee a sense of the continuity of the empire, it might also encourage those who sought to unseat the ruler. Behind Suetonius’ deadpan narrative lies a subtle illustration of how astrology and related arts were as much a factor for instability as for stability in the empire.

John Dryden’s famous characterization of Juvenal as “Zealous Vindicator of *Roman Liberty*” provides the starting point for Martin

²⁴ Rutledge, pp. 429–46.

²⁵ Konstan, pp. 447–62.

Winkler's chapter on Juvenal's perspective on and covert criticism of the system of power under which he lived and wrote.²⁶ *Satire* 1 foregrounds Juvenal's awareness of the limitations that confront an author in the imperial period. Names from the past obfuscate indictments of the present and this precautionary strategy advertises the diminished sense of free speech informing the composition of the *Satires*. Juvenal proceeds with caution by trying to strike a safe but still meaningful balance between the opposing constraints of power and artistic liberty. *Satire* 4 contains Juvenal's most extensive critique of imperial power. Winkler examines this satire in connection with Cassius Dio's report of the funereal banquet that Domitian gave a number of Roman senators. *Satire* 5 continues the topic of the preceding satire from a different perspective while 7, 8, and 10 reinforce Dryden's perspective.

Notwithstanding the range of authors and texts discussed in this volume, it could have been expanded to include yet more to illustrate its basic thesis—the prevalence of political discourse in imperial literature. Just one of these writers was Silius Italicus, whose life spanned a dozen emperors, including Nero, whose downfall in 68 CE he experienced as consul. Although Silius supported Vitellius in the bloody aftermath before Vespasian's accession late the following year, he survived and even seemed to flourish under the Flavian dispensation until he took his own life under Trajan (101). The implied commentary of his *Punica*, an epic poem on the second Punic war, is sensitive to the tensions, ideologies and violence of political life at Rome. For the narrative of the *Punica* reveals a Roman world whose moral values are already in decline and whose conduct in the Punic wars prefigures later Roman civil and political conflict. A senator like Varro, a demagogue (cf. 8.243–57); a city (other than Rome) like Saguntum, Rome's moral compass (cf. 1.271–2.707 *passim*); an (arch) enemy like Carthage, Rome's moral monitor (cf. 10.657–8); even a general such as Fabius Africanus, harbinger of self-serving ambition (cf. 16.695–7)—these and other representations reflect by comparison political and moral behavior at Rome during Silius' long life. Silius, no less than many of the other writers represented (and not represented) in this volume, played his political hand through his text.²⁷

²⁶ Winkler, pp. 463–82.

²⁷ On political elements in Silius see especially Ahl, Davis, and Pomeroy (1986) 2492–561; McGuire (1990) 4–31; McGuire (1997) *passim*; Dominik (2003b) 467–97; Dominik (2006) 115–27.

Writing Politics in Imperial Rome, then, establishes the pervasiveness of political content within Roman literary culture. Over almost two centuries from the 50s BCE to the 120s CE the mechanics of power—along with the avenues of advancement and competition at Rome—were displaced, re-thought, and re-configured. The norms obtaining in the late republican system were subsumed under a new dispensation in the principate and the sequence of emperors. Continuity of form between the republican and imperial systems typically gestured away from the reality of autocracy, though certain emperors concerned themselves less with the façade of republican institutions. And this difference from *princeps* to *princeps* itself points to the vulnerability of those living in this political system to the inclinations of the individual at its apex. The overarching context of production for the literature under consideration in this volume was a period in which the brinkmanship of aristocratic competition of the late republic had its sequel in the all encompassing dominance of the emperor, a figure who (in a famous formulation) was what he did,²⁸ a figure for whom the blanket right of acting in accordance with whatever he saw fit was granted him as a matter of constitutional law,²⁹ and a figure for whom laudatory attributions of personal virtues orbited anxiously around notions of self-control.³⁰ And of course this is not to imply the cessation of competition for power—both as it is traditionally understood and more broadly defined—at all other levels and contexts within Roman society in this period. This competition for status and power simultaneously unfolded in newly emerging arenas and avenues and co-existed alongside structures familiar from the late republic. In the literature of this period we naturally observe a vital and ongoing engagement with these transformative and transforming contexts of power. This engagement was itself expressed through varying strategies of communication that negotiated the mutable conditions of its own specific political moment and context. The abiding issues

²⁸ Millar (1977) 6.

²⁹ As explicitly stated in the sixth clause of the so-called *Lex de Imperio Vespasiani*: *utique quaecunque ex usu reipublicae maiestate divinarum hum[an]arum, publicarum privatarumque rerum esse censebit, ei agere facere ius potestasque sit...* (“and that there be the right and power for him to do whatever he decides to be of use to the state or in accordance with the majesty of things divine, human, public, and private...,” *ILS* 244).

³⁰ Cf., e.g., Wallace-Hadrill (1981) 316 on imperial virtues ascribed to emperors in the first century: “The focus is not on the possession of power, but on the control of it in deference to other members of society.”

informing the possession, dissemination, and use of power in these political systems—however it was variously formulated—are reflected directly in the concerns of the literature produced by the twenty-two late republican and early imperial poets and prose writers represented in this volume.

CHAPTER TWO

WRITING IMPERIAL POLITICS: THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL BACKGROUND

Steven H. Rutledge

The question of free expression under the early empire seems to have long been settled and now to be a dead letter. The working assumption of most scholars has been that free speech disappeared with the republic, which meant that senators once at liberty to express their sentiments now lived in fear of censorship.¹ Some scholars envision the principate as a time when the imperial *delator* (a nefarious “prosecutor” or “informant”) sat down, scroll in hand, and scrutinized a given work for references potentially critical—hence subversive—of the court.² Although a number of scholars have challenged the premise that certain individuals were prosecuted for offenses related specifically to freedom of speech (either of the spoken or written word), few have questioned comprehensively the true extent of the limits of free expression under the empire.³ A piecemeal approach that examines the limits of freedom of expression under individual emperors, however, has arguably limited our understanding of this subject by confining the inquiry to isolated cases where discussion is often disconnected from any larger social or historical context. Source criticism, too, has not always been as vigorous in subjecting the ancient literary record to the scrutiny it deserves. Of late a number of studies, both of a general theoretical nature and specific to Roman culture, have examined the interaction of both the social and political dynamics that limit free expression or the methods by which such limitations are variously tested, breeched,

¹ See, e.g., Caplan (1944) 295–325; Cramer (1945) 157–96.

² For *delatores* as thought police see, e.g., Rudich (1997) 4–15, who refers to the “decoding” of ancient works; cf. Barchiesi (1997) 30–3; Crook (1996) 111, whose discussion implies that official suppression of literature was a general trend. Cf. Syme (1939) 487; Syme (1958) 90; Kennedy (1994) 187–8, 191; Sussman (1972) 197; Rudich (1993) xxv–xxvi; Bartsch (1994) 107–10; Bauman (2000) 101–8; also Cramer (1945) 180: “Once the doors were reopened, actions for literary treason began to pour in.”

³ But see Ahl (1984a) 207, who notes: “First century senatorial writers who fell victim to imperial wrath were often arguably political rather than literary casualties—Lucan and Seneca, for example.”

and negotiated, though such methodology has yet to be applied to a general study of the present subject.⁴

In light of such current studies and as a result of the gaps cited in the scholarship, the present chapter attempts a more extensive consideration of this particular aspect of Roman antiquity and especially (though not exclusively) to come to terms with some of the obstacles faced in fully understanding the nature of free expression in ancient Rome. An important preface to such a study naturally must include some discussion concerning how the sources conceptualize *libertas*. Due to the limitation of space this discussion is not comprehensive, but an attempt is made to give a sufficient conceptualization as it applies to the types of cases addressed. The discussion includes the attendant “suppression” of *libertas* and the difficulties presented by the notion of “censorship.” Another important preface to this study includes a brief survey of some of the general problems that arise in the sources and that render problematic our understanding of this phenomenon. This study is structured around the different types of expression that the sources indicate had varying degrees of limitations imposed upon them. The first is the ability of members of the elite to speak within the senate or in a related political context. The second is the written productions of the senatorial elite, specifically history and biography. The next section examines derision and abuse and discusses the cultural and political dynamics that limited such expression between and among various social groups and within various contexts. What is hoped will emerge is a deeper appreciation of a phenomenon that belongs not to the caprice of a series of tyrants under the early empire but to a nexus of complex dynamics at play in Roman society.

A Social Space for Libertas

Traditionally and historically those who try to assess the politics or literature of the early empire look first and foremost to Tacitus and as a result tend to conceptualize *libertas* in almost exclusively political terms, perhaps understandably so, since that is his central focus.⁵ For Tacitus

⁴ Important discussions and studies examining the social aspects of this subject include Bartsch (1994); Wray (2001); Roller (2001); Konstan et al. (1998). For the phenomenon in the late republic see Corbeill (1996); see Scott (1990) for a good general, theoretical discussion.

⁵ See Morford (1991) 3420–49; Hammond (1963) 93–113; Martin (1981) 36. The

the subject of free expression is one that is implicated in the political struggle between the senate and *princeps*. It is also for him a historical barometer by which to measure the nature of the imperial system set in place by Augustus and his successors.⁶ Free and open deliberation in the senate, the ability to speak one's conscience, so vocally demanded by the likes of Pliny and Tacitus, influenced long and profoundly the view of Roman *libertas*.⁷ Numerous studies on *libertas* in Tacitus argue that he defined *libertas* as the ability of the senate to deliberate openly and of senators, among others, to write freely without fear of incurring the enmity or animosity of the *princeps*.⁸ Equally influential has been the historical analysis of our ancient authors, particularly Tacitus, who marks off at several points where *libertas* ends and *seruitium* ("servitude") begins. The result is that such studies often accept the historical or political parameters of our sources while considering less the social dynamics, although such dynamics ought not to be divorced from their political implications.⁹ Indeed, the very nature and structure of the present study occupies the liminal area of the social and the political, and its various categories and subsections hover between these two areas.

Roller's recent work is instructive in this regard. He notes that *libertas*, a highly charged political term, should also be understood as one based on how Romans viewed social relations. In his view *libertas* was assessed and defined based on the Roman understanding of

most comprehensive discussion of *libertas* and its relationship to imperial politics (though not freedom of expression) is still Wirszubski (1950). For a good discussion of the recent history of the study of the word *libertas*, see Roller (2001) 219 with n. 10.

⁶ See Tac. *Agr.* 1.3–2.3, where in comparing the republic and principate the later clearly comes out in a negative light, and where he attempts to assert senatorial *libertas* against a repressive *princeps*. Tacitus revisits the matter at *Hist.* 1.1: during Rome's first 720 years *libertas* and eloquence were equal and together nurtured great talents. It is noteworthy in this regard that he does not explicitly state that *libertas* perished at Actium but *ueritas*, and he expressly criticizes writers who pass beyond the boundary of *libertas* and fall into *malignitas*.

⁷ For Tacitus' association between *libertas* and open senate deliberations, see *Agr.* 45. The theme is frequent in his works; see, e.g., *Ann.* 1.74.6. Pliny makes the same connection between senatorial autonomy and *libertas*. See *Ep.* 8.14; cf. 9.13.

⁸ See, e.g., Morford (1991) 3420–49.

⁹ Indeed, the present study, at least in chronological and historical terms, falls into a similar pattern by limiting itself to the period between Augustus and Domitian, hence demarcating itself between Actium after which *ueritas plurimis modis infracta* ("truth was broken in very many ways") and the advent of Nerva and Trajan *ubi sentire quae uelis et quae sentias dicere licet* ("when it is allowed to feel what you wish and to say what you feel," Tac. *Hist.* 1.1); I thereby accept Tacitus' terms. A larger study that encompassed both republic and empire, however, might not turn up many radical differences between the two periods.

relationships such as *seruus* (“slave”)/*dominus* (“master”). Basing their definition on such relationships gave Romans (elite ones especially) a means to measure and assess their own status.¹⁰ By coming to understand what *libertas* is, Romans come to understand it as “not *seruitium*,” “not *licentia*” (“license”), “not *obsequium*” (“compliance”). *Libertas* is used not only to understand and classify social standing and relationships between different groups, but also among groups of the same standing. An understanding of *libertas* is also closely tied to the assessment of Roman social relations in terms of how it relates to cultural constructs such as status, *auctoritas* (the “power” or “influence” stemming from one’s rank or achievements), *dignitas* (a sense of “worth” by virtue of one’s merit), and *amicitia* (“friendship” and the nexus of social and political alliances it involved). We associate such terms with both the political and social contexts. Philodemus gives an idea of just how vital such socio-political considerations could be, noting that reaction to frank or free expression depended on variations between the addressor and addressee of intellectual ability, social standing, gender, and age, and that different people would respond differently to frank speech or criticism.¹¹ Such distinctions were evident in Rome from an early date and resulted in the protection of dominant groups from humiliation via verbal assault by “social inferiors” as well as the defense of members of the elite from one another.¹² An anecdote in the younger Seneca exemplifies these social dynamics: attempting to portray Tiberius negatively, Seneca compares Augustus’ leniency (*Ben.* 3.27) to Tiberius’ savage execution of a member of the praetorian guard (for using a chamber pot while wearing a ring with Tiberius’ image, *Ben.* 3.26).¹³ Seneca never men-

¹⁰ See Roller (2001) 220; for the extended discussion see Roller (2001) 219–33. The binary opposite Tacitus presents to his readers of *seruus/dominus* is a false alternative based on the cultural assumptions and political demands of the elite, none of whom are genuine *serui* as any Roman would understand the term.

¹¹ See Konstan et al. (1998) 20; see esp. 24: “the problems voiced...suggest that frank speech and openness among friends of unequal power and status were not a vague or abstract ideal but rather a tense social reality.”

¹² And given Rome’s history of violent class conflict and civil war among the elite, one can understand why such laws were on the books. As Wray (2001) 117 reminds us, aggressive or critical speech constitutes a prelude to physical violence. For early prohibitions on attacking one’s betters, see Wray (2001) 117. The bibliography on the question of prohibition during the republic is large; see, e.g., Frank (1927) 105–10; Lindsay (1949) 240–3; Mattingly (1960) 414–39; Robinson (1940); Robinson (1947) 147–50; Smith (1951) 169–79.

¹³ See Roller (2001) 155–7 for an interesting discussion of this passage (which does not directly address the difference in status between the two men); cf. Roller (2001) 167–8, who notes that who did and did not get accused was contingent on social relations.

tions the clear difference in status between Tiberius and the offender, something that would most certainly have a bearing on how the praetorian's case was treated.

The socio-political context in which one employed one's *libertas* generally was a serious consideration, as well. It mattered whether one spoke freely at a banquet, in the senate, in a court of law, or in the theater, and it mattered who was present.¹⁴ Hence the emperor Nerva, when dining with friends one evening, mused where the ferocious Domitianic *delator* Catullus Messalinus would be if he were still alive: *nobiscum cenaret* ("he would be dining with us," Plin. *Ep.* 4.22.6), replied Junius Mauricus, a well-placed man known for his candor. The remark, though considered rather frank (the implication was that he would have been a part of Nerva's court), did little damage to Nerva in this context; he could overlook Mauricus' remark. Public injury, however, was more egregious. This is especially the case for Roman elites, who were expected to abide by an ideological public transcript of parity amongst one another. Breaching that parity before an audience, where one's *auctoritas* and *dignitas* was the most vital, had the potential to do serious damage or cause embarrassment, as did Asinius Gallus' inquiry before the senate to Tiberius upon his succession.¹⁵ The concern to avoid such damage was paramount among the *inlustres* ("distinguished" or "noble") as is illustrated by the strict penalties for speaking ill of one another.¹⁶ For our purposes then, *libertas* occupies a social and a political space. Its definition is contingent on a nexus of relationships that often depend on a wide set of variables within a given case, including its social, political, or even historical and legal context.

¹⁴ See Roller (2001) 152–7 for his case study of the *convivium* ("banquet" or simply "entertainment") which examines social exchange, reciprocity, and their contexts in relation to speech (and for the social context of speech in general).

¹⁵ See Scott (1990) 112–14 for discussion of the elite maintenance of parity and the consequences of its breaking.

¹⁶ The word *inlustres* is used here as a term of convenience in reference to those of high status and is borrowed from Tacitus (*Ann.* 1.72.4); it is not a strict legal term. Prior to our period, in the late republic Lucilius had directed attacks in his satires against men of high status such as Caecilius Metellus, Papirius Carbo, and Lentulus Lupus; such attacks went unpunished. For discussion see Coffey (1989) 47–52; cf. Coffey (1989) 36 for Lucilius' apparent immunity. Sulla may have imposed further restrictions on free expression beyond those already established, restricting *ad hominem* attacks and making the law against libel more stringent; see Smith (1951) 175. For the limits on free expression in the law courts, see Lindsay (1949) 240–3, citing Cic. *Fam.* 3.11.2. Regrettably we have no specific cases in any detail to examine the workings of this law, nor precisely how libel was defined or understood. For a recent discussion of libel in the republic, see Chrissanthos (2004) 344 with n. 20.

This is not to imply that *libertas* is situational: while there is a context that demands consideration and mediates what can and cannot be expressed, such contexts do not stand in isolation. They rather depend on a series of shared societal values which require deeper consideration. Such values help to determine what allows sources like Tacitus to assess where *libertas* crosses over to *malignitas* (“spite” or “malice”) or *licentia* (a “presumptuous boldness” cloaked as freedom of expression) and to render that assessment intelligible to his audience.

Problems in Our Sources and Definition

Modern conceptions concerning what types of “expression” should and should not be protected cover a wide territory from speech to political assemblies and to art. Ancient notions of this concept were much more limited. Hence it excluded the consultation of astrologers or magic practices, activities potentially illegal that did not fall into the same category as speaking openly or writing about the emperor. Nor did it cover cases of *impietas*, although for us prosecution, say, for the simple removal of a statue would fall under “free expression,” serving to suppress the expression of one’s allegiances or tastes. Luxury laws could also fall under the category of free expression for us since limitation on expenditure is tantamount to a prohibition on self-expression through consumption.

Our understanding of actual “repression” is also problematic. As far as we know, there was no “secret police” sent out to “search and destroy” works, even those committed to the flames. Even if such an institution existed, how efficient such a system was is highly questionable. Consider, for example, Pliny’s discussion of the case of Fannia (*Ep.* 7.19.4–7): daughter of Thrasea Paetus and wife of Helvidius Priscus, she found herself a part of the defense in the case of Herennius Senecio, allegedly accused for writing a life of Helvidius Priscus. She had lent him her husband’s diaries and the senate ordered them destroyed. She managed though to save a copy despite her exile, the confiscation of her goods—and a presumably high profile case. Similarly, Arulenus Rusticus’ biography of Thrasea Paetus likely survived for Tacitus to use in his *Annales*.¹⁷ The case was the same for Cremutius Cordus

¹⁷ See Murray (1965) 41–61.

(Tac. *Ann.* 4.35) whose works survived despite sanctioned attempts to destroy them, provoking a sneer from Tacitus concerning the futility of such actions. Similarly the emperor Gaius, despite his predecessors' legal injunctions to destroy works by Cremutius, Cassius Severus, and Titus Labienus, allowed their writings *esse in manibus lectitarique* ("to be in hand and read repeatedly"), a tell-tale sign of the inefficiency, perhaps even impossibility, of wholesale suppression (Suet. *Calig.* 16.1).¹⁸ More effective may have been the destruction of Mamercus Aemilius Scaurus' orations, though even sketches (*libelli*) of these appear to have survived (Sen. *Controv.* 10 *praef.* 3). Equally problematic is reference to works by Fabricius Veiento. Tacitus states that they were sought out and read as long as to do so remained dangerous (*cum periculo parabantur*), but that subsequent tolerance cast them into oblivion (*Ann.* 14.50.2). Remarks throughout our sources, however, sometimes interpreted as tolerance, may in fact be simply a frustrated reaction to the inevitable: to excise all criticism, particularly the anonymous sort, was impractical (cf., e.g., Suet. *Tib.* 28).

The impossibility of such repression is perhaps best illustrated by Tacitus, whose *Annales* in particular relies on all manner of rumor and gossip—a "hidden transcript," to borrow James Scott's phrase—that exposed those in power to derision.¹⁹ The funeral of Augustus, the death of Germanicus, Messalina's adultery—according to Tacitus such occasions provided fodder for gossip that is by nature incapable of being policed. Only when ugly rumors emerged from the senator's *triclinium* or the plebs' tavern, piercing the accepted public transcript, did they make an impact, surviving for incorporation into Tacitus' works. Finally, having referred to the suppression of literary works, a few words are necessary concerning its definition, since the distinction of the "literary" from the "political" is often impossible²⁰ (as is similarly the distinction of the "social" from the "political"). This is particularly the case with Roman historical texts, a principle intent of which was to influence the ruling elite's political behavior but also to entertain. As is still the case

¹⁸ Cremutius' reissued work appears to have been an expurgated version of the original, according to Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.104.

¹⁹ For gossip, rumor, and the power of both, see Scott (1990) 142–5. On the power of gossip in the community in Rome (and on its ability to restrain behavior), see Wray (2001) 132–33; cf. Wray (2001) 140, citing Cicero's remark about its power at *Cael.* 38; on its ability to silence see Wray (2001) 158.

²⁰ Or the "literary" (or "poetic") from the "rhetorical": cf., e.g., Dominik and Hall (2007b) 7–8; Dominik (1992) 61–7; Dominik (1994b) esp. 1–5.

today, “literary” production may well be “political” in nature, and the two terms are not necessarily distinguishable for a single work.

In addition to the diverse conceptual problems concerning the various rubrics of “expression” and our understanding of such terms as “suppression,” one of the most serious difficulties we face in our understanding of this subject—indeed the major stumbling-block in our ability to analyze and assess it—is the vague and schematic presentation of this phenomenon in our sources.²¹ This is a problem that needs to be kept in mind and addressed throughout this chapter, though for the moment we need to consider directly sources which are at times quite contradictory or vague in their presentation of cases where “free expression” is purportedly quashed. Following the case of Aelius Saturninus, for example, Cassius Dio remarks that there were other instances he could cite in which people were accused of making disparaging remarks against Tiberius for which they were punished (67.23.1–3), though he gives no specifics.²² Cassius Dio follows this up by stating that Tiberius searched out his critics and had their remarks put on public record. He then chides Tiberius for damaging only himself when he publicized their criticisms. There are difficulties with Cassius Dio’s presentation: first, it is terribly vague, citing no specific cases—though he surely had access to more sources than we do now. He may in fact be thinking collectively of a series of other notorious prosecutions later in Tiberius’ reign. Secondly, the remark could conceivably refer to a number of cases related in Tacitus, including those against Granius Marcellus, against Drusus, the son of Germanicus, and against Fulcinus Trio for his vitriolic last will and testament in which he denounced Tiberius. In all of these cases the abusive words of Tiberius’ critics were made public. Cassius Dio’s remarks are at variance with what we know of Tiberius’ reign up until this time, however, when individuals were generally granted indulgence for opprobrious remarks against the *princeps*. In addition, it is very possible that, if Tacitus is in fact Cassius

²¹ The notoriously problematic case of Ovid is emblematic of the difficulties we face. Not only did Ovid’s works continue to circulate despite exile, but he continued to produce new works whose ambiguous words concerning Augustus resulted in no action, as far as we know, against the poet or his poetry. Concerning his offense, neither Ovid nor the remaining sources leave us much on which to reconstruct his case. For a good general discussion of Ovid’s fall from grace, see Levick (1976) 336 with nn. 130–1.

²² Dio’s presentation may in fact be based on similarly vague, unspecified remarks by Seneca (*Ben.* 3.26–7), who asserted that even drunken conversations under Tiberius were denounced.

Dio's main source, he may well have fallen prey to Tacitus' muscular rhetoric and presentation, which leaves the mistaken impression of a relentless march of death throughout the *Annales*.²³ More examples could be cited since Cassius Dio's portrayal of the same phenomenon under Caligula can prove equally, if not more vague, and the reader is given little if any context or information.²⁴ Equally vague is Cassius Dio's presentation of Neronian repression following Piso's conspiracy, and it is contradicted by Tacitus, who asserts that a check was put on prosecutions (*Ann.* 15.73).²⁵

Suetonius' presentation can prove equally problematic. Consider Tiberius' letter to Augustus lamenting a verbal attack against Augustus and the *princeps*' own response: *aetati tuae, mi Tiberi, noli in hac re indulgere et nimium indignari quemquam esse, qui de me male loquatur; satis est enim, si hoc habemus ne quis nobis male facere possit* ("do not indulge your age in this affair, my Tiberius, and be too indignant that there is anyone who speaks ill about me; indeed, it suffices that we have no one who is able to harm us," *Aug.* 51.3). We can do very little with such a case given Suetonius' terse presentation: who made the attack, what was said, what Tiberius intended for Augustus to do—all of this has vanished. In addition, Suetonius relates stories of Tiberius' attempts to construe certain actions as implicit criticism against himself or blasphemy against the imperial godhead, although he is short on specifics (*Tib.* 58). Given that we can detect almost no cases of *impietas* that were successfully prosecuted to their final conclusion in any of our sources, it is entirely possible that Suetonius convolutes these with prosecutors' *attempts* to have such charges accepted. For most cases, however, our source simply does not convey enough information for assessment.²⁶ Moreover, Suetonius contradicts his own presentation of Tiberius as a repressive tyrant (*Tib.* 28),

²³ See Barthes (1982) 162–6.

²⁴ For the various episodes see Cass. Dio 59.4.1–2, 6; 59.10.8; 59.11.5; 59.13.5–6; 59.16.1–2; 59.20.1–2; 5.

²⁵ See Cass. Dio 62.24.3, 63.15.1–2. Cassius Dio also relates the case of a man who incurred Nero's displeasure for his demeanor and scant praises of his speaking abilities; Nero merely refused to allow the man to come into his presence afterwards (62.10.1a), and nothing more.

²⁶ See, for example, the obscure case of Pompeius in the senate (Suet. *Tib.* 57.2); it is worth noting that we have here intimidation, not actual punishment. We recall from Pliny's letters that freedom of speech was qualified even under Nerva. See Plin. *Ep.* 9.13.10. See, too, the equally vague case of Zeno at *Tib.* 56, about which we lack details and context; compare the mysterious case of Seleucus at *Tib.* 56 (again with too few details for assessment).

noting his insistence on free expression, particularly in regard to the written word where he refused to allow denunciations.

While Tacitus sometimes gives us a fuller treatment of individual cases, as recently revealed by the inscription concerning the punishment of Gnaeus Calpurnius Piso, his presentation creates similar difficulties for analysis.²⁷ These will be discussed as they arise. Equally problematic in Tacitus, however, is the layer of senatorial hostility against the *princeps*, which presents yet another hurdle for us to overcome. The situation can perhaps best be illustrated for the moment through Tacitus' misleading depiction of recent history in the *Agricola*: ostensibly that work, and Tacitus' delay in writing it until after Domitian's demise, speaks to the more repressive atmosphere of Domitian's reign. So, too, does Tacitus' delay in turning to history in general.²⁸ The view is untenable: Domitian's character is thoroughly maligned in the *Agricola* and Tacitus pours poison in the well by reporting a rumor that Domitian had Agricola murdered. A work such as the *Agricola*, of course, would not be tolerated under Domitian. Indeed it is difficult to envision any *princeps*, no matter how clement, tolerating the circulation of a piece of literature that reports rumors—and only that—of his personal animus against a popular legate, an animus that here culminated, according to a backstairs whispering campaign, in Agricola's murder. Apparently the freedom "to say what one felt" under Domitian's successor, Nerva, included to Tacitus' way of thinking the freedom to report malicious gossip.²⁹ Given Tacitus' harsh treatment of Domitian, it is consequently not surprising that he would not have felt safe to publish his works under that *princeps*, especially when the substance of his work appears to have flirted with content arguably libelous in nature.

²⁷ For discussion of how Tacitus manipulates his material in this case, see Damon (1999) 143–62; such reworking doubtless has serious implications for similar episodes in Tacitus.

²⁸ Although there may have been other considerations: see Syme (1958) 129–31; but see Martin (1980) 40, who accepts Tacitus' reason for his delay.

²⁹ Indeed, Tacitus stands as a virtual textbook strawman to whom Lucian gave advice in his *Vera Historia* (*Hist.* 59), which admonished the historian to be sparing of reproach and to avoid playing the role of the sycophant, and remarked that the historian ought not to act as though he is in a court of law; indeed, he went so far as to take Theopompus to task for playing the role of prosecutor in his histories, a role arguably played by Tacitus; see Rutledge (2001) 181.

*Free Expression and Senators:
Possible Social and Political Limitations*

According to our sources, the probing of imperial power and the limits it enjoined on senatorial discourse began at once under Tiberius, though the level of freedom allowed appears frequently to have depended on the social standing of the individual and current political conditions. At the start of his reign, according to Suetonius, some senators felt sufficiently secure to mock Tiberius' hesitancy in accepting imperial power (*Tib.* 24.1). Suetonius may well have in mind the series of individual episodes reported at the beginning of Tacitus' *Annales*, where he notes Asinius Gallus' *faux pas* upon Tiberius' succession (*Ann.* 1.12.2). Tacitus further notes Aemilius Scaurus' and Quintus Haterius' want of diplomacy at the same session of the senate (*Ann.* 1.13.4), which was followed by an apparently offensive oration by Lucius Arruntius (*Ann.* 1.13.1). Now the alleged offenses and embarrassments caused by these gentlemen did nothing to prevent Tiberius from elevating Scaurus and Haterius to the consulship seven years later, nor Tiberius from keeping Arruntius as governor of Spain for ten years in succession. The case was similar a year later following Gnaeus Calpurnius Piso's query at the case of Granius Marcellus: In which order would Tiberius cast his vote? Piso did not want to contradict Tiberius if the *princeps* voted last; desiring something to follow, Piso requested that the emperor vote first. The request disconcerted Tiberius, who skirted the issue by referring the case to a lower court. Later Piso's frankness concerning the excesses of prosecutors in 20 CE carried no consequence but rather forced Tiberius to beg Piso in full view of the senate not to abandon public life (*Ann.* 2.34.1–3). Such action could indicate Tiberius' concern for senatorial autonomy.

But there is another possibility: each of these individuals was powerful in his own right. Indeed, three out of the four (Gallus, Arruntius, and Piso) were at least rumored to have been candidates for the succession (*Ann.* 1.13.2–4). The implication is that these men each had greater clout and social standing that enabled them to succeed in embarrassing, intentionally or not, the *princeps* and surviving, even during a politically dangerous time when the *princeps* was consolidating his power and armies in Pannonia and the Rhine were mutinous. Moreover, that they found themselves as relatively trusted members of the regime, despite their ultimate downfalls, indicates a level of social parity with the emperor.

The case of Cotta Messalinus in 32 CE further illustrate how social relations and political connections determined how “free” and candid speech could be (*Ann.* 6.5.1–2).³⁰ Cotta stood accused of impugning Gaius Caesar’s virility (*quasi incertae uirilitatis*) and of referring to a feast on the Augusta’s birthday as a *cena nouendialis* (“funeral feast”). In addition, while involved in a monetary dispute with Manius Aemilius Lepidus and Lucius Arruntius, he had referred to Tiberius in the diminutive (*illos quidem senatus, me autem tuebitur Tiberiolus meus*, “the senate certainly will protect those men; my little Tiberius, however, will protect me,” Tac. *Ann.* 6.5.2). Tiberius himself defended Cotta, citing his numerous offices and his long-standing friendship with him. Contrary to Seneca’s dim view of free expression during Tiberius’ tenure, Tacitus states that Tiberius insisted in the wake of this case that *uerba prauae detorta* (“words perversely distorted”) or *conuiuialium fabularum simplicitas* (“simple conversations at the table”) not be subject to charge (*Ann.* 6.5.2). It has already been noted above how this contradicts the action supposedly taken by Tiberius in the case of the praetorian. In addition, it is entirely possible that Tiberius had no direct involvement in the praetorian’s case and that he intended his admonition about twisting words to stand as a general principle. A major difference here, however, between those cases cited in the senate and Cotta’s is that Cotta’s remarks were delivered, insofar as we can tell, in a context that was less public (at a feast given by *sacerdotes*) than the other exchanges that took place in the senate where Tiberius’ prestige was always at the most risk because he was among his supposed peers. That high social standing could furnish a safety net through one’s connections is further illustrated by the case of Gaius Cominius, a Roman *eques* convicted in 24 CE of writing an abusive poem against Tiberius. He was acquitted through the intercession of his brother who was of senatorial status (*Ann.* 4.31.1).³¹

A similar case obtains for Fufius Geminus, consul of 29 CE. He was a close friend of Livia, a charmer with the ladies, but more to the point had a habit of ridiculing Tiberius (whether in speech or writing is unclear). Tacitus states merely that he was *dicax* (“sarcastic”) and that he had a penchant for *acerba facetia* (“bitter witticism”) that he was wont to aim at Tiberius (*Ann.* 5.2.3). According to Tacitus, Tiberius did not

³⁰ For discussion of the case see Roller (2001) 167–8 and Rutledge (2001) 99–100.

³¹ Here again we lack a context (was his poem delivered at a banquet?) and we lack any text (was it libelous?).

forget it.³² Again, however, we have a case where a close personal (and political) connection gave Fufius a level of protection to the extent that he could even subject the emperor to derision, though one suspects Fufius' personal charm may have helped here, as well. In both cases we once again confront the nebulous realm of social relations where what can and cannot be said is not written into law but depends on an amorphous set of rules and conditions.

Yet if it is argued that social relations, high status, and political connectedness gave some cover, what are we to make of the frank words of Terentius, a mere equestrian, directed against Tiberius in the wake of Sejanus' fall, and his subsequent survival (*Ann.* 6.8.1–6.9.2)? Here there are a number of alternatives. One of them is that Tiberius was simply too weakened to act with impunity against Sejanus' former supporters. Another is that Terentius saved himself by the sheer force of his rhetoric. Tiberius' weakened state could also explain why he ignored Lentulus' blunt and menacing letter from Germania. Here socio-political ties may have played an important role, however, since Tiberius had recommended a marriage connection between Lentulus and Sejanus (*Ann.* 6.30.4). Indeed, one might wonder whether it was concern for his own strength and position that moved Tiberius now to insist that Fulcinus Trio's vitriolic will and Drusus Caesar's fierce letter be read in the senate to demonstrate his tolerance for candor, hence show his strength (*Ann.* 6.38.1–3). In the end, however, it is most likely that there was in general greater freedom of discussion among senators and greater autonomy than the likes of Tacitus would lead us to believe. It may have been with this in mind that Tiberius, one day departing the senate and wearying of its adulation, remarked, *o homines ad servitutem paratos!* ("o men ready for slavery!," *Ann.* 3.65.3).

If our focus on Tiberius appears excessive, it is due to the serendipitous survival of our sources and not to the policy specific to the emperor. Indeed, indications are that under Claudius and Nero, too (similar evidence for Gaius is lacking), senators felt comfortable enough to contradict the *princeps*. We thus find that under Claudius there were some strong opinions against allowing Gauls into the senate prior to Claudius delivering his own opinion, which prevailed in the end (*Ann.*

³² In addition, Fufius was later charged with *maiestas* and forced to suicide, probably due to his connections with Sejanus (Cass. Dio 58.4.5–6).

11.23–4).³³ As for his successor, Thrasea's plea for clemency in the case of Antistius Sosianus went without punishment (though not without response), while the renowned jurist Gaius Cassius Longinus flatly contradicted Nero's desire to suspend sentence against the household of Pedanius Secundus, the ex-consul murdered by a slave in 62 CE (*Ann.* 14.42–5). Other senators could be included among those who did not suffer for their independence. Thrasea Paetus, Helvidius Priscus, and other opponents of the court do not appear to have incurred any punishment even for the most confrontational and frank opinions under Nero. Their demise stemmed from a very different set of reasons and circumstances.

What man of senatorial status, then, suffered for speaking his mind? Outside the area of literary production among senators only two possibilities can be detected, and both are cases that were probably not linked exclusively to a charge pertaining to free expression. The first is the case of Titius Sabinus, a victim of the struggle between Sejanus, Tiberius, and the elder Agrippina (*Tac. Ann.* 4.68–70). The treacherous Latinus Latiaris enticed Sabinus into an intimate though indiscrete conversation where he denounced Tiberius and Sejanus and lamented Agrippina's fate. Sabinus was promptly denounced and executed. Tacitus makes the case out to be one in which Sabinus is accused for his words. It has been noted, however, that Sabinus' denunciation and punishment was extraordinary, likely more a matter of dynastic politics or conspiracy, and need detain us no further.³⁴

It is apparent from the pages of Tacitus and elsewhere that, while there certainly appears to have been imperial indulgence towards candor, except in the most intimate company, men and women of rank were generally more discrete in their conversation, something conceivably based on political or legal as much as social considerations. There was a whispering history of every regime that discussed *spintriae* and *sellarii* (both names for a variety of a male prostitute), incest, adulteries, and eunuchs skilled in administering fatal potions. But a *convivium* of mixed company or, one suspects, even the portico fronting the senate or the meeting rooms of the *pontifices* were not the places for such discussion.

³³ It is important to note that this debate took place after Valerius Asiaticus' prosecution. Claudius was likely trying to neutralize Gallic provincials in light of the threat posed to his own security by Asiaticus in 47; see Levick (1990) 56, 60, 64; cf. Rutledge (2001) 106–9.

³⁴ See Rutledge (2001) 144–6 for a discussion of this case's difficulties.

It was in the *cubiculum* of Maternus, after all, where the character of powerful time servers or profiteers of the court such as Eprius Marcellus and Vibius Crispus were criticized (Tac. *Dial.* 8). That the intimacy between Latiaris and Sabinus was betrayed (their conversation took place *in cubiculum*), the “social space” violated, was precisely what made this case so shocking to Tacitus. Yet even in the *Dialogus* Maternus was cautious before the dubious character of Marcus Aper to compliment Vespasian as *sapientissimus et unus* (“someone also most wise,” 41.4) despite his apparent jab at grandees in his *Cato* (whether directed against Vespasian or merely his minions we cannot know).

Vespasian’s reign, in fact, contains the only other instance in which a senator suffers for his vocal opposition, although this time in a far more public setting. Helvidius Priscus inherited his father-in-law’s opposition to the *principes*. The general impression left by our sources is that Helvidius was a bitter opponent of Vespasian, who eventually lost patience with Helvidius, had him exiled and executed—though not necessarily by imperial mandate, since Vespasian reportedly tried to reverse the order (Suet. *Vesp.* 15). His initial opposition against the *principes* came in the reign of Vitellius, who was generally lenient—in fact, completely tolerant—of his criticisms even when Helvidius dared oppose him in person before the senate (Cass. Dio 65.7.2). The remaining senators, to judge from Tacitus’ *Historiae*, were collectively much more guarded and self-censoring that year, understandably so, given the fluid and volatile political atmosphere in 69 CE. Again, however, the case need not overly concern us, since it has been noted by a number of scholars that there is more to the case than simple vocal opposition. Possible aspirations at revolution, encroaching on the prerogatives of the *princeps*, and tampering with the succession all stand as possibilities.³⁵ It may have been in conjunction with Helvidius’ case, though this is far from certain, that the Cynic Diogenes’ public abuse of Titus resulted in a flogging, while the Cynic Heras’ vituperations resulted in his execution (Cass. Dio 66.15.5). Sporadic persecution of intellectuals was not unusual in Roman society, however, and such punishments would be normal for men of their status. Moreover, the very public abuse of one such as Titus would not be tolerated coming from anyone, let alone a lowly philosopher. Unfortunately we have few specifics concerning these two cases, but there is surely more here than meets the eye; their actions,

³⁵ See Rutledge (2001) 126–8 for this case with bibliography.

as Jones notes, could have involved the succession since they appear to have been particularly abusive of Titus himself.³⁶ It was one thing to contradict or challenge the *princeps*' opinion; to assail him verbally in a public setting was quite another.

Senatorial History and Biography

Constraints not legally but politically or socially "codified" frequently appear to have determined the limitation of expression in historical works and biography as well. The case of Asinius Pollio is instructive in this regard. The first poem in Horace's second book of *Odes* indicates that Pollio ranks among the first to test the limits of the written word under the new regime. Horace warns Pollio about the dangers of writing history: *incedis per ignis / suppositos cineri doloso* ("you walk on fires set beneath treacherous ash," *Carm.* 2.1.7–8). Pollio was known for his sharp pen (and tongue), and Horace's concern could easily lead one to conclude that Pollio was endangering himself.³⁷ Horace's wording is so vague, however, that it could refer to numerous possibilities: the opening of fresh and painful wounds is one of them; the embarrassment of the living is still more plausible.

Both Pliny and Tacitus note that historical composition certainly had its limitations. Indeed, Tacitus notes the possible social ramifications quite explicitly in the *Annales*: *reperies qui ob similitudinem morum aliena malefacta sibi obiectari putent. etiam gloria ac uirtus infensos habet, ut nimis ex propinquo diuersa arguens* ("You will find those who think that the misdeeds of others, on account of the similarity of their mores, are cast against them as accusations. Even glory and virtue have enemies, since they accuse their opposites from too close a contrast," *Ann.* 4.33.4). Tacitus here clearly refers to the potential for offense that such writing could cause, and he may have had experience of it first-hand if he is in fact the historian referred to in a well-known episode in Pliny's letters. In that instance several men begged an unnamed historian to refrain from reading publicly (though not from writing) a section about a certain friend, a request to which the writer acquiesced:

³⁶ See Jones (1984) 92–3 and Rutledge (2001) 173 for discussion with bibliography.

³⁷ See Sen. *Controv.* 4 *praef.* 3; Suet. *Aug.* 43.2; Plin. *HN* 36.4.33 (for his *acris uehementiae*). For discussion and bibliography of Pollio's histories, see Syme (1958) 136.

ecce amici cuiusdam orantes obsecrantesque, ne reliqua recitaret. tantus audiendi quae fecerint pudor, quibus nullus faciendi quae audire erubescunt. et ille quidem praestitit quod rogabatur (sinebat fides): liber tamen ut factum ipsum manet manebit legeturque semper, tanto magis quia non statim.

(Plin. *Ep.* 9.27)

Now mark this, the friends of a certain man begging and beseeching that he not recite the rest. So great was the shame of hearing the things he did in the doing of which there was none, things that they blush to hear. And that man indeed did what was asked of him (good will permitted it): the book nevertheless remains as it was written and will remain and be read always, so much the more because it was not read at once.

The letter gives us a glimpse into the social pressure that could be used to censor an author in the context of a public reading, where not legal but communal constraint was a factor in self-censorship.

Though admittedly a problematic case, the episode of Curvatus Maternus and the reading of his provocative *Cato*, whether the event (and Maternus) is accepted as historical or not, gives us a more detailed window into the limits senators were expected to observe within a socio-political context. What is important here is that his friends have come to warn him that his *Cato* had apparently crossed a line and to urge him to edit it (Tac. *Dial.* 3.2). A discussion then takes place in which Marcus Aper argues that, for the sake of his own standing and the building of social and political capital (*amicitia*, *necessitudines*, and *dignitas*), Maternus should cease his provocative activity and return to politics (*Dial.* 5.4; cf. 6.2–4). This, along with Pliny's letter, offers a rare glimpse into the type of social pressure that could be brought to bear on works deemed in one way or another to have crossed the boundaries of acceptable elite discourse.

It may have been a similar set of dynamics that led to the discouragement of the young Claudius from including certain periods of Augustus' reign in a family history at the behest of his mother and grand-mother (the pressure for censorship coming from familial rather than senatorial sources). Claudius' work started just after Caesar's death, skipped the unseemly period of Augustus' career during the second triumvirate, and picked up after the battle of Actium. According to Suetonius he omitted the previous period, feeling that he was able to discuss the previous period *neque libere neque vere* ("neither freely nor truthfully"), and was often reproached (*correptus saepe*) by his mother and grand-mother (*Claud.* 41.2). Here the phrase *correptus saepe* does not signify official censorship, merely familial pressure to which Claudius finally

capitulated. What is not plausible in any of our cases (Maternus' problematic *Thyestes* excepted) is to understand that official action was taken against the offending parties. Pollio's history continued to be read (Tac. *Ann.* 4.34.6), and he remained an important figure in Roman politics and literature (Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.113) while, as Pliny notes, our anonymous historian did not edit his narrative.

We are left, then, with five problematic cases among the senatorial elite in which historical writing may—and only may—have been prosecuted. The first is Cremutius Cordus in 25 CE, who was prosecuted for praising Brutus and calling Cassius *Romanorum ultimum* (“the last of the Romans,” Tac. *Ann.* 4.34.1). The case has received much attention from scholars, with various solutions posed concerning the motive for the charges.³⁸ One of the key difficulties in understanding the case is that the sources for the prosecution are sympathetic to Cremutius and are not therefore entirely candid. Enmity between Cremutius and Sejanus (though that alone certainly did not suffice for a prosecution), abusing the godhead of Augustus, aiming at revolution, breaching the spirit of the ban on the *imagines* of Brutus and Cassius, and a generally hostile intent behind his writings (thereby rousing enmity between the *princeps* and his subjects) have all been suggested as possible motives for Cremutius' prosecution.³⁹ While his suicide allows us the luxury of asserting that we do not know what the outcome of the case would have been, that luxury is undermined by the destruction of Cremutius' works, which were ordered burned by the *aediles*. Accounting for such action is not easy. The case remains suspicious since Roman authorities up until 26 CE had only destroyed works containing libel or circulating under the names of others.

The four other prosecutions that arise are in conjunction with the Stoic opposition during Domitian's reign, an opposition that remained

³⁸ See Tac. *Ann.* 4.34–36 and Suet. *Tib.* 61.3; for discussion with bibliography see Rutledge (2001) 95–6. For the magnification of the literary charges in this case, see Bartsch (1994) 106; for the most recent discussion see McHugh (2004) 391–408.

³⁹ For enmity as a motive in prosecution, see Epstein (1987) 92–5. Cremutius was confrontational to say the least, as his insults to Sejanus, his remarks in the senate (as Tacitus presents them, *Ann.* 4.34–35), and what little we know about his style from Quintilian and elsewhere show (*Inst.* 10.1.104; cf. Sen. *Dial.* 6.22.4–5, 6.26.1). Bauman (1974) 101–2 argues for an attack on the emperor's divinity, a solution to be accepted only with reluctance given that no one had yet in 26 CE been convicted under such a charge. Levick (1976) 194 argues that Cremutius' history contained hostile political implications; cf. MacMullen (1966) 19–21. See Rutledge (2001) 95–6 for the question of *imagines* (“images” likely in the form of statuary).

relatively latent until 93 CE or later. These include the prosecutions of Herennius Senecio, Arulenus Rusticus, the younger Helvidius Priscus, and Fannia. All of these cases, ostensibly related to freedom of expression according to our sources, may have had very different motives behind each of them.⁴⁰ Breach of *fides* and desertion of *munia publica* are suspect in the three out of the four cases, with the possibility that they were also related to involvement in some larger, more sinister event during Domitian's reign, such as Saturninus' revolt. As in so many cases, however, the content and context of their works are missing, as are more detailed accounts in our sources. Nonetheless, it is clear that their destruction had a traumatic affect on Tacitus (*Agr.* 2.1), Suetonius (*Dom.* 10.1–4), and others, and effectively silenced Rome's elite (*Tac. Agr.* 2–3, 45).

*Derision and Abuse I:
Inlustres versus Men of Lower Status*

The Roman cultural system protected the ruling class's *dignitas*. Since a great man's public face ought to project *auctoritas* and *gravitas*, it demanded respect even if it took violence to maintain it.⁴¹ To subject a man of standing to derision and public ridicule was offensive and demeaning, and the Romans sought various methods to control it. This is famously illustrated by the laws regulating attacks on individuals in the theater. The numerous cases in which freedom of expression is variously regulated or even prohibited in the early principate appear at times to be an extension of an old convention. Hence under Augustus it seems that libel laws—which had existed previously, though perhaps with less rigorous application—were at last enforced.⁴² In general there was a pecking order: plebs must not attack their superiors; senators must not attack one another; nor must they attack the *princeps*—though again some of this was contingent on the context in which a particular remark

⁴⁰ For a more extensive discussion of these cases, see Rutledge (2001) 131–35; for pertinent bibliography see Rutledge (2001) 363 nn. 97–102. Cf. Coleman (1986) 3087–115.

⁴¹ See, for example, Nero's father, who maimed a publicly abusive equestrian (*Suet. Ner.* 5.)

⁴² Perhaps now because (as previously noted) words are a precursor to physical aggression; see Wray (2001) 117. Augustus' enforcement possibly underscored his desire for greater control over the elite's cultural and political life, which in the late republic entailed civil strife and all manner of invective and violent rhetoric.

was made. The relationship between the addressor and addressee, the social milieu, or the political situation could variously determine or qualify what could and could not be said.

The interdiction from attacking *inlustres* resulted in two of our earliest and most spectacular prosecutions under the principate. Augustus was forced to take action against both Titus Labienus and Cassius Severus for libel. They stand as notorious prosecutions where harsh penalties were exacted as a result of literary compositions.⁴³ Labienus was accused of writing orations deemed malicious. His works were condemned to the flame, possibly leading to Labienus' suicide. Cassius stood accused of attacking *inlustres*. Their fates elicit the indignation of both the elder Seneca (*Controv.* 10 *praef.* 4–8) and Tacitus (*Ann.* 1.72.4), who connect these cases with the principate's increasingly autocratic nature. We should hesitate before accepting their claims, however, and it is doubtful that everyone will have commiserated with either man. Both were known for their harsh style; Labienus had even earned the appellation "Rabienus" (Sen. *Controv.* 10 *praef.* 5), while Cassius apparently took pride in his acerbity (Quint. *Inst.* 8.3.89). In Cassius' case, Tacitus notes (*Ann.* 1.72.3) that Augustus was not motivated by attacks against himself but by attacks against *uiros feminasque inlustres* ("distinguished men and women"), against whom Cassius had written *procacibus scriptis* ("licentious writings").⁴⁴ Suetonius' life of Vitellius gives us some idea of the nature of Cassius' writings and why they will have been offensive: he had attacked one of the earliest members of the *gens Vitelli* as a cobbler whose son went on to become an informer and a dealer in confiscated property, who himself married a prostitute, the daughter of a baker (*Vit.* 2.1). The veracity of such claims is questionable at best, patently prevaricated at worst. Cassius was exiled to Crete but later, when he did not relent from his attacks, he was sent to the more desolate Seriphos (in 24 CE) and his goods were confiscated (Tac. *Ann.* 4.21.5). His works were banned under Augustus and Tiberius, but Gaius allowed them to come back into circulation along with those of Labienus (Suet. *Calig.* 16.1), and Quintilian was clearly familiar with

⁴³ For a recent discussion of these cases with detailed bibliography, see Rutledge (2001) 89, 209–12.

⁴⁴ Augustus himself does not appear to have persecuted personal attacks against him; hence the material circulated by Antonius and his allies was still available for Suetonius to integrate into his biography; see *Aug.* 2.3, 4.2, 7.1, 10.4, 16.2, 68, 69.1, 70.1; cf. *Ner.* 3.2.

them (see, e.g., *Inst.* 10.1.22).⁴⁵ It is worth noting that Suetonius, who remarked their return into circulation and used them as a source, says that both writers (along with Cremutius Cordus, whose works Gaius also permitted to be read) had their works suppressed by senatorial decree, and he mentions nothing about imperial involvement.⁴⁶

Outside of these two cases, we know that Augustus also took action against defamatory pamphlets and *carmina* circulated under the names of others, a move probably intended to protect both the alleged authors and their targets; as such it scarcely constitutes a limitation on expression.⁴⁷ A similar case occurred prior to Sejanus' fall in 29 CE when *fictae sententiae* ("false attacks") were circulated in the name of the consuls against Sejanus (*Tac. Ann.* 5.4.4). Tacitus says their circulation provoked Sejanus' ire and added *materies criminandi* ("the material for a criminal charge") for the prefect and his minions, though it is not certain whether anyone was in fact prosecuted. It could be that such attacks constituted part of the charge against Agrippina and her children, though this is uncertain, and Tacitus makes no mention of the attacks (i.e., the *fictae sententiae*) when he recounts Agrippina's final prosecution. Sejanus' desire to suppress the false attacks scarcely constitutes an excess limitation on expression since the matter concerned works *sub alieno nomine* ("under another's name"). The only other specific case where we can attach the name of an *inlustris* ("a man of distinction") to an attack on men of the same status is that against Fabricius Veiento in 62 CE. The case can be dismissed, however, since it involved the more damaging charge of trafficking in offices.⁴⁸

Among these cases several simple principles appear to be at work: *inlustres* could be embarrassed by other *inlustres*, but attacks should be leveled honestly. If they were not, penalties ensued. It was as true for

⁴⁵ Indeed, Cassius' works were even popular: see *Tac. Dial.* 19.1–3. Why, we might ask, if it was illegal to libel, were they allowed back into circulation? Were the targets of the libel dead? Did Gaius intend to embarrass members of the aristocracy with their republication? Such recirculation merely raises further questions to which there are little beyond conjectural solutions.

⁴⁶ For Cremutius it may have been a matter of family politics (he was the enemy of Sejanus, persecutor of Gaius' mother after all), while the individuals (though not their families) whom Cassius and Labienus had attacked may well have been dead by Gaius' reign.

⁴⁷ See *Suet. Aug.* 55. See Smith (1951) 179 for similar action under Sulla, citing *Dig.* 47.10.5.9. It may have been in association with some popular unrest; see Bauman (1967) 260–4 for discussion.

⁴⁸ See Rutledge (2001) 114–15 for detailed discussion.

Augustus as it was for Domitian who, Suetonius reports (*Dom.* 8.3), came down heavily on those who composed lampoons against *primores* (distinguished men and women). He gives no specifics, however, and there was nothing extraordinary in Domitian's action, given Augustus' treatment of Cassius Severus nearly a century before. Such restrictions must be understood in their larger social, political, and legal context that protected the public status of the elite, who recognized (at least during the principate) that it had an interest in being saved from itself. Cassius Dio was among those who certainly understood this principle when he noted that there were occasions when men of high status could at times better tolerate the *παρρησία* ("frankness of speech") of the plebs than men of rank (59.26.9).

Taking jabs at men of lower status was naturally less problematic. To cite but one example: Asinius Pollio could launch an epigrammatic assault against Marcus Pomponius Marcellus, a noted grammarian, as a no-talent boxer (Suet. *Gram.* 22). The attack appears to have entailed no consequences, something attributable to the fact that Marcellus, who was likely of low status, had no recourse when attacked by the well-placed Pollio.⁴⁹ Individuals of lower standing, such as Pomponius, had little recourse when it came to retaliation since limitations on expression for those of lesser standing, a long tradition in Rome, were relatively severe. Even in the republic actors, buffoons, and playwrights such as Naevius and Plautus were particularly (and famously) targeted, and similar restrictions survived into a later age.⁵⁰ There also appears to have been prohibitions against playwrights (and probably actors too) criticizing individuals from the stage by name, which incurred a charge of *iniuria* ("injurious" or "unlawful conduct"); hence, while Terence criticizes individuals in his prologues, he does so only in the most general terms.⁵¹ That may account for our paucity of cases not

⁴⁹ Compare the case of Curiatius Maternus, who supposedly broke the power of the Neronian courtier Vatinius simply by reading one of his dramas (Tac. *Dial.* 11.2). See Frank (1937) 225–9 for a detailed conjectural discussion about the subject of this tragedy; cf. Kragelund (1987) 197–202.

⁵⁰ For limits imposed on Roman dramatists see Hor. *Epist.* 2.1.145–55; August. *De Civ. D.* 2.9. Cf. *ueteribus displicuisse Romanis uel laudari quemquam in scaena uiuum hominem uel uituperari* ("it displeased the ancient Romans either that any man living be praised or be reproached from the stage," Cic. *Rep.* 4.10.12). For censorship in the Roman theater in general, see Robinson (1947) 147–50; for Naevius see Mattingly (1960) 414–39. Cf. Donatus *ad Ter. Eun.* 57. For a recent general discussion of such limitations on the Roman stage, see Wray (2001) 117–19.

⁵¹ For Terence's detractors see Suet. *Ter.* 3; for his response see the prologue to

only in the republic but during the principate as well, though there were some exceptions. Principally these are cases, however, that involved the *princeps* himself.

It thus comes as little surprise then that Gaius had a writer of an Atellan farce burned alive in the arena for a line with a *double entendre* (Suet. *Calig.* 27.4). Under Nero there was a similar case, when the actor Datus was charged with delivering a potentially subversive line in Greek, ὑγίανε πᾶτερ, ὑγίανε μήτερ, during an Atellan farce, which translates “farewell father, farewell mother” (Suet. *Ner.* 39.3). The line was accompanied with a gesture that imitated Claudius drinking and Agrippina swimming, unmistakable allusions to the murderous nature of their deaths. Datus was banished, though whether Nero was behind the penalty is unknown. Similarly Vitellius in his brief reign took a hard line against buffoons (and astrologers), according to Suetonius (*Vit.* 14.4).⁵² Harsh punishments also awaited philosophers and rhetoricians possibly for the same general reason: public attack on public figures in venues (such as rhetorical contests) that were considered tantamount to a performance.⁵³ Hence under Gaius came the banishment of Carrinas Secundus, a ῥήτορα (“orator”), allegedly for delivering a speech against tyrants as a rhetorical exercise in 39 CE (Cass. Dio 59.20.6; cf. Juv. 7.204–5). While the case presents a difficulty for us (such cases seem almost a stock motif), if true it certainly stands within the context of the sort of public “performance” Romans condemned, and must be understood as such.⁵⁴

the *Adelphoe*. Elsewhere we hear that Accius and Lucilius both brought up charges for libel for *ad hominem* attacks in *scaena nominatim* (“on the stage by name,” *Rhet. Her.* 1.24, 2.13.19). Accius won his case while Lucilius did not; see Smith (1951) 171 for discussion. For Lucilius’ legal action against Accius and others see Knoche (1975) 36–7.

⁵² Certainly in the case of the *mathematici* there will have been some justification; sitting emperors, even secure ones, were prone to take measures against astrologers given the potential they had for creating instability. See, e.g., Cass. Dio 57.15.8; cf. Suet. *Tib.* 63.1. For Atellan farce see Suet. *Galb.* 13, where an actor verbally assaults Galba; what, if any action he took is unknown.

⁵³ The hostility and suspicion towards philosophers and rhetoricians, however, dated back to the republic: witness their expulsion in 161 and 92 BCE (Suet. *Gram.* 1).

⁵⁴ Cf. Cass. Dio 67.12.5 for Maternus the Sophist’s execution in 91 due to his declamation against tyrants. Cassius Dio gives us no further information and the story sounds suspiciously anecdotal, yet even if it is not, too little is known about the case to assert with certainty that it is tantamount to suppression of free speech. Even if one accepts it as such, was Maternus prosecuted for an impromptu declamation? Or is this a matter of some circulated writing and, if so, what were its contents? In their larger cultural context, philosophers for a variety of reasons were always suspect in Rome. Indeed Vespasian, who *solusque omnium ante se principum in melius mutatus est* (“alone of all

Far different was the actor Apropos' fate after a witticism about Vespasian's squint (made at the emperor's expense); his remark met with no punishment (Suet. *Vesp.* 20). It is notable, though, that Apropos' witticism did not take place in the context of a stage performance but during a chance encounter, and that it was Vespasian, not Apropos, who was the instigator. Isidorus, a Cynic philosopher, was less fortunate, though the case was different since he vocally and deliberately abused Nero in a public setting (Suet. *Ner.* 39.3). Isidorus was banished (though we cannot be certain if Nero or the senate was behind the penalty).⁵⁵ Suetonius presents the episodes under Gaius and Nero as aspects of the imperial tyranny, something unlikely given the penalties associated with attacks from the stage. Status may also have been a consideration in the execution of a citizen who made an abusive remark against Domitian at a gladiatorial contest (Suet. *Dom.* 10.1), though here, as elsewhere, we have too little information for assessment; certainly, though, the public nature of the humiliation, which likewise motivated laws governing the stage, will have played a role in the penalty. Amongst one's peers the tavern, not a public venue and certainly not in the presence of the *princeps* (particularly not in his capacity as benefactor of the plebs), was the more acceptable context for frank speech.

Some contexts certainly did allow for grandees to be mocked or jeered at with impunity in a public venue, as during the Floralia, a festival known for its ribald nature, where Lucius Caesianus could poke fun at Tiberius' baldness with no action taken against him.⁵⁶ But on the whole the norm whereby the more humble abstained from attacks against the powerful in published works or at large public gatherings was deeply internalized, as is indicated by the fact that we have only two major instances in which men of high standing (besides Caesar) are supposedly attacked in our period by men of lesser standing, and of these the first one is dubious: Phaedrus has long been assumed to be an individual of low standing and to have been the object of Sejanus' wrath after he was denounced by malicious readers who construed his

emperors before him changed for the better," Tac. *Hist.* 1.50) persecuted them just as his son Domitian later did. For discussion of the general prosecution of philosophers, see Gruen (1990) 171–8; cf. Wallace-Hadrill (1988) 225.

⁵⁵ For discussion of Isidorus' case (and Datus'), see Bauman (1974) 141–2.

⁵⁶ See Cass. Dio 68.19.1–2, where he also notes Tiberius' tolerance. For abuse in similar contexts (of a religious nature) compare Caesar's triumph (Suet. *Caes.* 49.3–4) and Vespasian's funeral (Suet. *Vesp.* 19.2).

fables as critical of the court.⁵⁷ Champlin, however, has now shown that Phaedrus was far more likely an individual of high status who chose Aesop's fables as a medium through which to "speak truth to power" safely and who had less concern for the legal consequences of those who libeled or attacked others openly such as Cassius Severus.⁵⁸ That very choice surely gives insight into the possible limitations of speech, however, and the same could be said of the cases of others, particularly those of lesser status, if indeed they were prosecuted for literary works containing dicey mythological or historical subjects. Hermogenes of Tarsus, for example, may have been another who, like Phaedrus, employed *quasdam in historia figuras* ("certain allusions in his history") while writing under Domitian, though with less fortunate results since he was executed (Suet. *Dom.* 10.1).⁵⁹

The other major instance also occurs under Tiberius. Tacitus tells us that the right of sanctuary was being abused, with men of low status grabbing hold of images of Caesar and reviling those who were well-placed against whom they happened to have a grievance (*Ann.* 3.36.1). Freedmen were abusing patrons; slaves were abusing masters; women were abusing men. The issue abutted up against rights of asylum, but in the end senatorial status and *dignitas* prevailed, perhaps not surprisingly, over the sanctity of marble.

Derision and Abuse 2: Mocking Caesar

The *princeps*' very name designated his special status as first man in the state. As such, attacking him was in a sense ethically and (due *de facto* to laws prohibiting attacks on *inlustres*) legally forbidden to all, although social connections could garner one some protection. The situation can perhaps best be summed up by Asinius Pollio's remark cited in a

⁵⁷ See Champlin (2005) 99, citing Schmidt (2000) 708–9 as an example of the standard take on Phaedrus' status and his alleged punishment, the later being based on the remarks in Phaed. 3 *prol.* 38–44.

⁵⁸ See Champlin (2005) 99–101, 115–17 for his excellent argument for Phaedrus' high status and discussion of the reasons for his choice of literary form.

⁵⁹ The bare mention of Hermogenes in but a single sentence is again emblematic of Suetonius' sketchy presentation of such cases. Further details concerning Hermogenes' status, the nature of the allusions, and any larger context are missing; see Jones (1992) 123 for discussion. If a Greek from Tarsus, then it is reasonable that Roman grandees would find the source of even such veiled criticism irksome. For the use of "figured speech" as a vehicle for criticism, see Ahl (1984a) 176–79, 185–96, 200.

late source: Octavian had attacked Pollio in some verses. Pollio pointedly refused to respond and stated: *at ego taceo. non est enim facile in eum scribere qui potest proscribere* ("But I am silent. For it is not easy to write against him who is able to proscribe you," Macrobi. *Sat.* 2.4.21).⁶⁰ As *princeps* and the highest placed man in the state, however, the same social dynamic may have been at work, as in the cases of Asinius and Pomponius, in which it was impolitic for one of lower status to attack a superior. But a problem arises. A recent study cites the Asinius/Augustus anecdote as an instance of the repressive nature of Augustus' regime,⁶¹ yet Macrobius attributes it to an earlier time during the heyday of the so-called second triumvirate (*temporibus triumviralibus*) when the political situation was even more unstable and dangerous than it normally was in the world of Roman politics. That could explain Pollio's remark as well as his subsequent skirting of the edge with his histories. Pollio needs to say no more, however, in a sense having said succinctly all that needed to be said.

Given Caesar's rank and the general interdiction from attacking *inlustres*, it comes as little surprise that attacks to which a name can be attached are few and, more problematically, almost always appended to other charges. The first detailed case we have arose when Romanus Hispo prosecuted Granius Marcellus, *pro praetore* of Bithynia, for *maiestas* ("treason") in 15 CE. In the course of the prosecution Hispo related the gist of some *sinistros de Tiberio sermones* ("unfavorable remarks about Tiberius") made by Granius (Tac. *Ann.* 1.74.3). An added charge was that he had set his own statue higher than Caesar's. Tiberius grew enraged though it appears his anger was directed at the absurdity of the charge (of *impietas*), charges that were thrown out (though not those concerning provincial maladministration). Tiberius' ire notwithstanding, Hispo went on to become one of the most powerful men at Tiberius'

⁶⁰ See Wray (2001) 58–9, for discussion. Cf. Richlin (1983) 103, who notes that the Romans at least during the republic seem to have regarded verbal abuse as a legitimate form of invective. In addition, Richlin, citing Macrobi. *Sat.* 2.4.19, 29, notes that Macrobius says that Augustus took jokes on himself very well. Wray (2001) 59 notes in terms of attacking grandees during the principate: "No comparable consideration ever stayed Catullus' hand. Julius Caesar...responded to Catullus' invective smear campaign with neither retaliation in kind nor threats of a direr vengeance, but rather with an attempt at personal and familial reconciliation." While this is indeed true, it is noteworthy that even when he became dictator he limited his response to Cicero's *Cato* with his *Anti-Cato*.

⁶¹ As Wray's study (2001) 58–9 implies.

court, and his family remained prominent for a century or more.⁶² The case illustrates why emperors may have been loath to prosecute the scurrilous remarks of anyone, noble or plebian: as Wray has noted, the risk was simply too great that airing such remarks in court (a context in which it was acceptable to repeat words critical of the *princeps*) could do more damage to one's reputation than ignoring them.⁶³ Indeed, the next time we do hear of such a case is when a woman named Varilla is prosecuted before the senate on a number of charges, including adultery and speaking disparagingly of Augustus, Tiberius, and Livia. Tiberius instantly dismissed the case and it need not concern us further.⁶⁴

Equally obscure is Votienus Montanus' case in 25 CE. An anonymous *delator* succeeded in having charges brought against Montanus, *celebris ingenii viro* ("a man of celebrated talent"), for *maiestas* ("treason") *ob contumelias in Caesarem dictas* ("on account of insults spoken against Caesar," Tac. *Ann.* 4.42.1–3). The presence of a military guard and the introduction of a soldier as witness, however, indicate something more serious at work here.⁶⁵ For the next case we must wait for nearly a decade until 34 CE, when Mamercus Aemilius Scaurus (who had hitched himself to Sejanus' wagon) was accused ostensibly for writing a tragedy entitled *Atreus*.

It is tempting to dismiss this charge against Scaurus as a mere pretext since other accusations, including adultery with the princess, Livilla, and *magorum sacra* ("magic rites") made up a substantial portion of the charges.⁶⁶ The possibility remains that it was indeed an important part of the case inasmuch as the *Atreus* was a drama and attacks on *primores* from the stage were prohibited, although this suggestion is problematic. According to the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, the specific prohibition was against attacking anyone *nominatim in scaena* ("by name on the stage"). If the allusion was not *nominatim* but veiled and the work was not performed *in scaena* but, say, recited at the house of a friend, would such

⁶² See Rutledge (2001) 207, citing Plin. *Ep.* 4.9.16.

⁶³ Wray (2001) 121. In a court of law lawyers had immunity from prosecution for repeating potentially damaging remarks, remarks that could elicit anger but not necessarily punishment. See, e.g., Suet. *Rhet.* 6 (the case of the lawyer Albucius who praised Brutus with impunity). For lawyers taking excess advantage of courtroom immunity, see Suet. *Claud.* 15.3–4; cf. Cass. Dio 68.1.2.

⁶⁴ See Rutledge (2001) 61 with n. 42 for discussion and bibliography.

⁶⁵ See Rutledge (2001) 97, 351 n. 60.

⁶⁶ For the case see Tac. *Ann.* 6.29.4–7; Dio 58.24.4; Suet. *Tib.* 61.3. See Rutledge (2001) 100 for recent discussion. For the magnification of literary charges see Bartsch (1994) 106.

a performance be considered to have violated at least the spirit of the law? It is worth noting in this regard that years later when Antistius was prosecuted for his *probrosa carmina* ("lampoons") against Nero, Tacitus remarks, *uulgauitque celebri conuiuio* ("he made them public at a crowded banquet," *Ann.* 14.48.1), and we can only wonder if there may have been a perception that the *carmina* were delivered in a performative context, adding to the charge. All of this raises a number of questions for Scaurus concerning the nature of his *Atreus*, of its "publication," and whether the mere recital of such tragedies was considered a "performance" and hence a legal transgression.

In this sense the case may—and only may—share a common thread with the cases of Curiatius Maternus and the younger Helvidius Priscus. In the first case, that of Maternus, it is simply important to note that sometime in 75 or 76 CE he had given a reading of a tragedy whose subject was Cato, a great symbolic (and anti-Caesarian) figure for the Stoic opposition under Nero and the Flavians.⁶⁷ The subject offended some powerful members of the court, but Maternus simply hardened his stand despite his friends' pleas for self-censorship (*Tac. Dial.* 2.1, 3.3, 10.6). Indeed, Maternus vowed to say still more in his *Thyestes*. If this did constitute a charge, it may have been in keeping with the long-standing principle prohibiting public criticism in drama. Other charges, however, including *secessio* (withdrawal from political life and abdication of one's political obligations), will have carried greater weight.⁶⁸ The difficulty here is that there is no sure evidence that the tragedy was directly connected to Maternus' demise (and Maternus' very identity is problematic).⁶⁹ Beyond this we can recover nothing further concerning Maternus' case, but the central point here is that if Maternus did indeed perish soon after the conversation took place, it may have been for reasons besides his literary compositions. As it

⁶⁷ See Rutledge (2001) 129, 362 nn. 81–3 for a discussion and bibliography. For the *Dialogus* as fiction see Potter (1999) 44. Potter's view is problematic: the mention of Maternus' demise and his breaking of Vatinius' power refer to events that, as Tacitus presents them, presume audience familiarity. Moreover, the dialogue's setting looks to the Ciceronian tradition (as in, for example, the *De Re Publica*) in which, while the actual dialogue may never have occurred, it nonetheless is grounded in actual historical events.

⁶⁸ See Rutledge (2001) 129.

⁶⁹ Contra Rudich (1985) 98, who connects Maternus' demise to his literary compositions; cf. Barnes (1986) 242; Williams (1978) 34–5. See Rutledge (2001) 129, 362 n. 83, citing Talbert (1984) 24 and *Tac. Hist.* 1.2.3; also cf. Quint. *Inst.* 11.1.35. See Rutledge (2001) 131–2 for the possibility of similar charges against Herennius Senecio.

stands there is too little known about this case to make a definite assertion one way or the other.

We face similar difficulties concerning the younger Helvidius Priscus, who gave offense when he wrote a play, the subject of which was Paris and Oenone, that contained a subtext of criticism about Domitian's divorce from his wife Domitia.⁷⁰ Other potential factors may have been involved in his demise (such as breach of *fides* or family enmity).⁷¹ If we do accept that the younger Helvidius was persecuted solely for his dramatic work, then his death could conceivably be understood further in light of Scaurus' and Maternus' destruction provided we accept that their demise was also related to dramatic composition, something that remains highly conjectural. If we accept this possibility, then an expansive interpretation of the law understood to be applicable in such cases would further explain the choice of mythological or historical subjects: since it was not permitted to attack individuals from the stage *nominatim*, there would naturally be recourse to allegorical allusion (as was the case with Phaedrus), although if such were the case it clearly did not always protect the author.

The question is somewhat less important for Scaurus' case, though, since the combined charges of magic and adultery appeared to doom Scaurus from the start, and the episode ended with his suicide.⁷² It is worth noting that for some reason (why is unclear), however, Scaurus' works (his orations but not, it appears, the *Atreus*) were also committed to the flames (Sen. *Controv.* 10. *praef.* 2–3; cf. *Suas.* 2.21). The censorious action may have been ineffectual, however, for Tacitus implies elsewhere his own familiarity with Scaurus' ability as a speaker (*Ann.* 3.31.7) praising him as one of the *uberrimus* (most rich in terms of his inventiveness and style) orators of his generation.⁷³ For Scaurus (and for

⁷⁰ For the younger Helvidius Priscus see Rutledge (2001) 133–4, 364 n. 105, citing Suet. *Dom.* 10.4, Tac. *Agr.* 45.1, and Plin. *Ep.* 9.13.1, 3, 7.30.4. For the younger Helvidius Priscus' execution see Plin. *Ep.* 3.11.3. Ahl (1984a) 207 and Bartsch (1994) 78–9, are too fast, I believe, to accept that Helvidius Priscus' ruin resulted from his literary composition.

⁷¹ See Rutledge (2001) 134; cf. Rutledge (2001) 130. Breach of *fides* is a possibility because he had been elevated to the consulship (before 87 or in 93); see Gallivan (1981) 211. The younger Helvidius may have been inspired to follow the same intractability against Domitian as his father had against Vespasian, hence an element of family enmity.

⁷² See Rutledge (2001) 100, 352 n. 83 for discussion of Scaurus' trial.

⁷³ Again with this case, vexing and unanswerable questions arise: Were his orations on the order of Labienus' attack against *inlustres*? And even if they were, why did

others whose works were burned) there are serious impediments in our ability to appreciate why their works were destroyed: though admittedly an argument from silence, we simply do not know their contents. For all we know, his orations and other similar works contained material that was libelous. Such attempts at destruction, including those we hear about under Domitian, may have been intended as a type of *damnatio memoriae*, a further measure aimed at obliterating the memory and the *imago* of the individual. Whatever the motive, it is worth noting further that from everything we know Scaurus was not one to shrink from speaking his mind.⁷⁴ Equally obscure is the case in 36 CE of Sextius Paconianus, who was strangled in prison, Tacitus states, *ob carmina illic in principem factitata* (“due to poems written repeatedly against the emperor,” *Ann.* 6.39.1), although he was initially imprisoned because he was involved in Sejanus’ designs against Gaius in 32 CE (*Ann.* 6.3.4) and one of the main motives in eliminating Sextius now could well have been Gaius’ growing ascendancy.⁷⁵ Both these cases need to be understood in the context of the penalties for attacking *inlustres* (and, as always, we have no idea of content or for that matter whether Sextius’ *carmina* possibly fell under the rubric of magic) and in the context of how harshly competition for the succession played itself out.

Domitian’s execution of Aelius Lamia is another case that presents us with equally serious difficulties. Suetonius only says that Lamia was executed *ob suspiciosos quidem, uerum et ueteres et innoxios iocos* (“for admittedly suspicious but old and harmless jokes”) made at Domitian’s expense (*Dom.* 10.2). There were possibly deeper reasons for the fall of Lamia, especially given that Domitian had apparently appropriated his wife, and manifest ill-feeling flowed between the two men. Moreover, Lamia’s case is related in conjunction with the fall of Civica Cerealis, Salvidienus Orfitus, and Acilius Glabrio, who all fell with good reason—particularly in Cerealis’ case, since he was involved in the revolt of Antonius Saturninus.⁷⁶ In this context Suetonius’ adjective *suspiciosos*

Tacitus omit their destruction from his work? His *Atreus* may have survived; in this regard it may be noteworthy that we have no mention of any destruction of Helvidius’ or Maternus’ tragedies.

⁷⁴ See, e.g., *Sen. Ben.* 4.31.3–5 for Scaurus’ bilious temperament.

⁷⁵ Compare the anecdote of an equestrian executed when he abused the elder Agrippina’s memory under Gaius (*Cass. Dio* 59.10.4); the episode is almost certainly a matter of dynastic politics. Gaius was never charitable towards the faction that had persecuted his mother.

⁷⁶ For discussion and bibliography see Rutledge (2001) 130.

would appear to indicate something less than innocuous. Equally suspicious is that Lamia's case is mentioned along with the fall of Junius Rusticus and the younger Helvidius Priscus, both of whom fell allegedly for their literary works but probably in fact met their fate for a variety of reasons. Suetonius concentrates a series of prosecutions all of which he makes out to be matters of free expression, but some of these cases are conceivably based on quite different charges. In a similar vein, Sallustius Lucullus, governor of Britain, is executed for naming a new type of lance "Lucullean"; scholars are justly skeptical of the charge and associate his demise instead with possible opposition to Domitian's policy in Britain (Suet. *Dom.* 10.3).⁷⁷ For Domitian, though, as for any *princeps*, it appears telling that such cases as these come in the wake of political setbacks that expose weakness or the precariousness of the imperial position, since our sources at least indicate that such prosecutions appear concentrated around challenges to imperial power including the conspiracies of Sejanus and Piso or the revolt of Saturninus.

One such case arose in 32 CE after Sejanus' fall when Tacitus reports that Tiberius denounced Sextus Vistilius in a letter to the senate. The reason given for the denunciation is *seu composuerat quaedam in Gaium Caesarem ut impudicum, siue ficto habita fides* ("either he had composed certain things against Gaius as one who was shameless, or credibility was given to something fictitious," *Ann.* 6.9.1–3). Tacitus' words indicate that the charges against Vistilius were perfectly appropriate since the choice he offers his readers is that either he had attacked Gaius with an unsubstantiated accusation (note *ut impudicum*) or that the charge was believed though untrue (*ficto habita fides*). In either case, the indications are strong that the case was a matter of libel, though partisan politics concerning the succession cannot be ruled out. Vistilius committed suicide after his condemnation.

For the next case, that of Antistius Sosianus in 62 CE, we must wait thirty years.⁷⁸ Only a brief sketch of the case is necessary: Antistius had written some lampoons (*probrosa carmina*) against Nero, and worse still, made them public (*uulgauitque*) at a crowded banquet (*celebre conuiuium*) at Ostorius Scapula's house (*Tac. Ann.* 14.48–9). One suspects the context of their publication was as offensive as the actual content of the work,

⁷⁷ See Jones (1992) 133–4.

⁷⁸ See Rutledge (2001) 113–15, 190–1.

whatever that may have been. Antistius faced a charge of *maiestas*.⁷⁹ Our sources indicate that Nero hoped to exploit the prosecution to showcase his clemency; however, after the senate voted for condemnation and Junius Marullus, the consul designate, suggested the death penalty, Thrasea Paetus anticipated Nero's proposal of leniency (much, it is alleged, to Nero's displeasure). Nero then sent the senate a letter reiterating the seriousness of the charge, assuring them of his tolerance, and adding that they could have acquitted Antistius. As has recently been remarked, there are serious difficulties that make our interpretation of this case problematic: Nero's true sentiments are difficult to ascertain; his involvement in the case may have been minimal; and he appears only to have intervened when the senate was at an impasse concerning Antistius' fate.⁸⁰ Be that as it may, Antistius may well have been guilty of libel (Thraseda never protests Antistius' innocence), and the case would therefore have had ample legal precedent.

It was not nearly as long a wait for the next case, which came in the wake not only of Piso's conspiracy but Thraseda Paetus' downfall, when one of his followers, Curtius Montanus, was charged with composing *detestanda carmina* ("abhorrent verses"). Montanus' case was in essence dismissed, but he was disbarred from holding further offices. Concerning the *carmina* nothing is known. Moreover, it must be asked, what does *detestanda* mean? Were they directed against the *princeps*, against *inlustres*, or were they simply bad or immoral? We have no way of knowing, though presumably one of the first two choices is the most likely; but if that is the case then the sentence was relatively lenient and understandable.

Thus far we have considered instances of senatorial abuse and ridicule directed at the Caesars. For men of a slightly lower, that is, equestrian standing, we have only two cases in which literary composition resulted in their demise, and the level of imperial, as opposed to senatorial involvement, is dubious. These are the cases of Clutorius Priscus (in 21 CE) and Aelius Saturninus (in 23 CE).⁸¹ The ostensible

⁷⁹ See Suet. *Ner.* 32.2; see Rutledge (2001) 356 n. 11 for discussion.

⁸⁰ Rutledge (2001) 114, citing Bradley (1973a) 172–82.

⁸¹ There is another case in 15 CE in which a man allegedly whispered to a corpse to tell Augustus that the people had not yet received their promised donative; he was consequently put to death by Tiberius (Cass. Dio 67.14.1; Suet. *Tib.* 57.2). This is all we are told and the identity and status of the alleged victim remains almost entirely unknown. Tacitus, for one, takes no notice of it. The case could be one where an individual was attempting to incite ill will between the *princeps* and the people, but there is too little information for further analysis.

charge against Clutorius was that he had written a eulogy of Tiberius' son, Drusus, during an illness from which Drusus ultimately recovered.⁸² He was executed with undue haste by decree of the senate, something that elicited Tiberius' rebuke since he was not consulted. A number of scholars have noted the difficulties in seeing this purely as a matter of free expression. Tiberius' *moderatio* aside, it has been plausibly argued that the case, inasmuch as it took into consideration the composition of a *carmen*—which could have been interpreted not as a simple literary composition but the composition of an incantation intended to speed if not effect Drusus' demise—could have been tried quite legitimately under the *lex de sicariis et ueneficiis* ("the law concerning assassination and poisoning" with the possibility of the use of sorcery or magic included).⁸³ Whether we accept this interpretation or not, it is noteworthy that Priscus' social connections clearly would have helped him had the senate delayed in carrying out its sentence. Priscus was Tiberius' client and previously had been commissioned to write a poem lamenting Germanicus' death. His connections and standing with some of Rome's leading women unfortunately proved less useful since all the noblewomen present at the reading except one, Vitellia, testified against Priscus.

Following Priscus' case Tiberius, according to Cassius Dio, turned ugly and started to apply the *maiestas* law with greater vigor against words presumably both written and spoken; however, Cassius Dio mentions only the case in 23 CE of Aelius Saturninus, who was thrown from the Tarpeian rock for some verse composition (57.22.5–57.23.3). This punishment may appear severe, yet we have too little information about the context of the case for assessment (though status may have been a factor in his execution).⁸⁴ One possible argument for his lower status is Tacitus' silence on this matter. Since he rarely lets go an opportunity to malign Tiberius, the absence of this case from his history is remarkable. If his verses were in any way construed as pertaining to magic or astrology (astrologers were banned in 16 CE), then the action taken against Saturninus must be understood in that context.⁸⁵ As it stands, we do not have enough evidence for anything other than conjecture.

⁸² For Clutorius see Woodman and Martin (1996) 362–72; Rutledge (2001) 92–3.

⁸³ For discussion see Rutledge (2001) 93, citing Bauman (1974) 63–4.

⁸⁴ See Rutledge (2001) 94.

⁸⁵ For the ban of 16 in the wake of the trial of Scribonius Libo see Rutledge (2001) 158–61, esp. 371–2 n. 13.

Finally, there are a number of lampoons and satires that we cannot place but that appear to have met with no punishment, in part because most of them appear to have been anonymous. Suetonius, quoting several satirists, remarks that Tiberius was dismissive of even the most vicious satire (*Tib.* 59.1–2). Similarly, in an undated incident, when defamatory libels were posted on the senatorial seats in the theaters, Suetonius says that Tiberius tried to hide the incident or would sometimes ignore such writings altogether, but says nothing of any attempt to punish or even seek out the authors (*Tib.* 66). Under Claudius we have on record a work published entitled *Mōrōn Epanastasis* (“The Elevation of Fools,” Suet. *Claud.* 38.3). There is no indication that the author faced any penalties or that the work was censored even though it was clearly directed against Claudius. For Nero’s part, he refused to entertain accusations even of those who spoke ill of or otherwise derided him for the murder of his mother (Cass. Dio 61.16.2–3), contradicting Cassius Dio’s remark that numerous informants denounced those who criticized Nero for his crime and that no one dared speak their mind in public (62.16.1–3). Suetonius (*Ner.* 39.1–2), who may have used a source in common with Cassius Dio, reports the same sort of tolerance, citing a number of different verses that taunted Nero for matricide, the conflagration of the city, and his artistic pretensions. He further notes that Nero did not seek out the authors and prohibited the senate from imposing harsh sanctions on any accused of such crimes. Indeed, the adverb *patientius* (“rather patiently”) that Suetonius uses to describe Nero’s attitudes towards his critics recalls Tacitus’ description of Vespasian in his *Dialogus* (41.4). In addition, Suetonius mentions a lampoon that made the rounds concerning Nero’s liaison with Poppaea Sabina (*Otho* 3.2). Although an *argumentum ex silentio*, as far as we know no action was taken against the author nor was there any attempt to seek him out (despite Poppaea’s proud and ruthless temperament—at least as Tacitus depicts it in *Ann.* 14.61.3–7). At the end of his reign Nero came under heavy attack in a number of lampoons, particularly after Vindex’s revolt in 68 CE. Abusive graffiti was brazenly scrawled on his statues (Suet. *Ner.* 45.2), yet there is no record that anyone was punished, though in the wake of the revolt Nero may have been too weak to take any action. Suetonius vaguely refers to *uituperatio publica* (“public censure”) directed against Titus (though whether it came before or after his succession Suetonius does not say), but whatever its nature, it does not appear to have resulted in anyone’s punishment (*Tit.* 1).

In regard to such attacks we have only two instances of replies made by the emperor. Suetonius (*Vesp.* 9.2) and Cassius Dio (66.11.1) take it as a mark of tolerance that Vespasian limited his response to public lampoons by simply posting his own replies to them, though it is remarkable perhaps that neither Tiberius nor Nero replied to similar attacks. Similarly, we are told that Domitian was so sensitive about his baldness and took so personally any jest about it (Suet. *Dom.* 18.2) that he replied with a treatise entitled *De Cura Capillorum* ("On Hair Care"), perhaps in keeping with his father's example. Certainly in Vespasian's case it is possible to take an Occam's razor approach to explain why he bothered to respond: Vespasian liked a good joke and was known for nothing if not his sense of humor and affable manner. Vespasian's rule was not marked by many particularly notorious or untoward events, and in Domitian's case, it is his hair (or lack thereof) that is attacked. We have no matricide, no persecution of popular members of the imperial family that are assailed, that is to say, no action which could bring the *princeps* and his legitimacy into serious question (although there certainly was in play a question of the *princeps'* *dignitas*, something not to be discounted lightly). It is possible, then, that the responses of Vespasian and Domitian were made because they occupied a relatively safe "space" where the *princeps* could answer his critics. They may have also viewed such attacks as an occasion to distinguish themselves from their Julio-Claudian predecessors; such written responses looked back further and were the sort that Julius Caesar and Marcus Antonius used to make against their critics a century before.⁸⁶

Feeling What You Want and Saying What You Feel

Let us accept for a moment Syme's scenario: Tacitus, writing his *Annales*, had become embittered against a repressive government. That government was one in which dissent was sufficiently dangerous to compel Tacitus to choose a topic in the more distant past and introduce a subtext of criticism against the regime. Yet if one were to read a text like a *delator*, scrutinizing it for criticism, one seriously wonders if anyone

⁸⁶ As in Caesar's *Anti-Cato*, a reply to Cicero's *Cato*, and Marcus Antonius' *De Ebrietate Sua*, a response to attacks by Augustus and his supporters; for Antonius' treatise see Plin. *HN* 14.28.148; Sen. *Ep.* 83.25.

would have written anything. Consider simply the reign of Nero. It is worth noting that Persius, who dies in 62 CE, never faced prosecution, though his satires were well known (Suet. *Pers.*). This is significant since there was ample material in Persius which one could read as criticism against Nero, including a reference to Orestes (3.116–18), which after 59 CE would have had sinister implications but which was apparently circulated publicly without fear (Suet. *Pers.*).⁸⁷ We should, therefore, doubt whether Cornutus, Persius' editor, actually altered some verses in his poem in order that they not be read as an attack against Nero. More openly hostile was the relationship between Nero and Lucan. Nero very publicly walked out of a reading of Lucan's work (Suet. *Luc.*), incurring the poet's ill-concealed hostility. Indeed, Lucan even went so far as to attack Nero and his friends in a notorious poem, making vulgar jokes about Nero's talent as a poet.⁸⁸ Lucan's works were certainly repressed, as Tacitus states (*famam carminum eius premebat Nero prohibueratque ostentare, vanus aemulatione*, "Nero suppressed the fame of his poetry and had prevented him from putting it on public display, vain in his rivalry," *Ann.* 15.49.3).⁸⁹ There is no mention in Tacitus, however, that Lucan's works were prohibited from being read, let alone destroyed, only that Lucan himself was prohibited from making them public. Ahl has suggested that the ban may have been motivated by Lucan's *De Incendio Urbis* ("On the Burning of the City"), written in the wake of the great fire of 64 CE; the poem will have blamed Nero, rightly or wrongly, for the fire, something Ahl correctly notes would have been "intolerably offensive."⁹⁰ In the end, however, it was not Lucan's poetry but rather his involvement in the Pisonian conspiracy that brought about his demise.⁹¹ Moreover, we find that—Lucan's involvement in that conspiracy and the blatantly anti-Caesarian nature of his poetry notwithstanding—grammarians still felt sufficiently secure to lecture in public on his work despite imperial displeasure with Lucan (and

⁸⁷ For discussion see Dilke (1972) esp. 73–4. Although Suetonius notes Persius' attacks against noted orators and poets of the day, he appears to have done so with impunity, something in keeping with Nero's reluctance to take action against the written word.

⁸⁸ For Lucan's quarrel with Nero see Rudich (1997) 94–6.

⁸⁹ Cf. Cass. Dio 62.29.4 for the prohibition on his works. For discussion see Ahl (1971) 5–9, 15–20, who argues that the prohibition stemmed in part from his publication of both the *Pharsalia* and the *De Incendio Urbis*. Suetonius makes no mention of the ban on Lucan's works.

⁹⁰ Ahl (1971) 8.

⁹¹ For discussion of Lucan's involvement in the Pisonian conspiracy and the attempts of our sources to underplay it, see Ahl (1971) 9–14.

the same was true for Ovid, whose popularity, exile notwithstanding, remained undiminished). Perhaps equally telling of Nero's tolerance were the instant associations that Seneca's tragedies could have had as criticism, including the *Thyestes* and *Oedipus* (cf. Cass. Dio 63.22.6). With fratricide and rumors of incest with his mother, where, we must ask, was there a richer field for the *delator* to denounce a subtext critical of the *princeps*?⁹² Yet it never happened. Seneca's tragedies were never consigned to the flames and Seneca perished, like Lucan, not as a martyr to free expression, but as the victim of Piso's ambitions. Most striking of all perhaps is that Thrasea's *Cato* is never mentioned as a part of the charges against him.

Indeed, the same case could be made for Domitian's reign. Was there not ample material, for example, in Statius for denunciation? Yet the *Thebaid*, with its ominous subtext of fraternal strife lurking underneath (read rumors of the uneasy relationship between Domitian and Titus at Suet. *Dom.* 2.3), was composed under Domitian and tolerated.⁹³ The case is the same, too, for poems such as *Silvae* 2.7, with its copious references to Cato (a supposedly dicey topic given the sympathies of the Stoic opposition) and to the *rabidi nefas tyranni* ("the wickedness of a savage despot"). Other literary endeavors under Domitian should have held equal risk, such as Fabius Rusticus' composition of a history of Nero's reign (which may well have been sympathetic to Thrasea, the tutor of Helvidius' opposition). It is further worth noting that Titinius Capito's verses celebrating Brutus, Cassius, and Cato were not necessarily written under Nerva but Domitian, and without consequence (Plin. *Ep.* 1.17.3). Any of these works will have had the potential for a subversive reading.

Between the *Agricola*, *Historiae* and *Annales*, Tacitus appears to draw a set of artificial (and hostile) chronological limitations from the time of Augustus through Domitian's reign when constraints on expression were tight. Writers such as Pliny and Juvenal reinforce this impression. Yet it has been pointed out that Juvenal, writing under Trajan, numbers similar constraints among his chief concerns (1.151–3). Similarly,

⁹² Although the critical subtext lurks everywhere; as Bartsch (1994) 156 notes, even flattery can be read subversively. Moreover, a subtext is not necessary for one such as Seneca who felt secure enough to presume to instruct Nero on the proper way to comport himself in office in the *De Clementia*. He was not alone; his praefect Burrus was free of tongue as well (Cass. Dio 62.13.1–2).

⁹³ See Dominik (1990) 74–97; Dominik (2005) 514–27.

Martial opted for retirement under Trajan after a servile retraction of the work he wrote under Domitian. Pliny flattered the new *princeps*, and Tacitus for his part takes the opportunity first in the *Agricola*, then in the *Historiae*, to adulate Trajan.⁹⁴

But let us not fall into the trap of chronological distinctions and capricious *principes*. There were far more complex dynamics determining the often movable boundaries of acceptable discourse in ancient Rome. These were contingent not so much on the policies of an individual *princeps*, as on a variety of socio-political factors and dynamics, many of which were products of the deeper structures of Roman society. None of this is to deny the political dynamics that limited one's freedom to express one's thoughts. The angst Tacitus and Pliny voice over the limits on expression would make no sense if they were not responding to genuine concerns. Moreover, the possibility for adverse consequences always lurked in ambush, as the case of Clutorius Priscus shows. Hence an undercurrent of anxiety naturally permeates our sources and is expressed in the pressures on the anonymous historian to edit his work, on Maternus to emend his *Cato*, and on Pliny to watch his words in the senate (to cite but a handful of examples). That anxiety, however, was driven by both political and social considerations. Consider simply the destruction of the works of Titus Labienus and Cassius Severus. Both abused men of rank. The suppression of their works was politically motivated, in the sense that it tried to maintain the ruling elite's *dignitas*, a key element in its claim to authority and legitimacy. Yet *dignitas* is inseparable in the end from its larger social context as well, which for the Romans implied a significance pertaining to their status, privilege, and ultimately power.

An understanding of the Roman approach to the question of free expression needs to be understood in both its social and political terms, and that to separate the two areas is to create a dichotomy the Romans did not recognize in distinct terms. Taken as a whole, the ability to "feel what you want and say what you feel" was never entirely in the hands of the *princeps*. The *libertas* to do that depended on one's place in Roman society, on the nature of what was said, and on the context

⁹⁴ It is worth noting in this regard that Lucian remarked that the contemporary historian would rightly be deemed a flatterer; there is no intimation that anyone would think to write dissident history (*Hist.* 40). Such *adulatio* was all of a piece with the quasi-standard "denigration" of one's predecessor, see Ramage (1983) 200–14, (1989) 640–707.

in which one expressed oneself. The perceived limitations that constituted—in the eyes of a Tacitus or a Pliny—tyranny, such as it was, came in no small part from within, rendering many complicit due to an inextricable undercurrent of social and cultural dynamics that in the end were inseparable from the political realm.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ I thank the Department of Classics at Brown University for allowing me to present this discussion during a visit in February of 2003 and for the valuable comments and suggestions of the department in the ensuing discussion. My deep thanks and appreciation also go to Victoria Pagán for her constructive insights and to my dear friend Bob Wagoner, for whose support and encouragement I am deeply grateful. Finally, I would like to extend a special thanks and warm sense of gratitude to the editors of the current volume for their help and assistance in the final phases of this study's publication. Any errors or omissions are my own responsibility.

CHAPTER THREE

LUCRETIVS AND THE FIRST TRIUMVIRATE

John L. Penwill

The most disturbing problem of all is our failure, our refusal to even recognize that the pursuit of affluence and growth is a terrible mistake.¹

Composed in a time of major political upheaval, in which the Roman *res publica* had effectively come under the control of the gang of three that we have come to know as the first triumvirate, Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* presents an account of the world and humanity's place within it that is totally at variance with the values of those in power and their agents and supporters. That in itself is enough to brand it as a political text.² Add the fact that it is addressed to one of the prominent players in the contemporary political game (C. Memmius: tribune 66, praetor 58, would-be consul 53),³ the fact that it deliberately takes issue with one of

¹ Ted Trainer, 'Ockham's Razor', ABC Radio National, 27 November 2005.

² The four relatively recent works that examine the ways in which the *De Rerum Natura* engages with the political situation of its time are Grimal (1978) 233–70; Minyard (1985); Fowler (1989) 120–50; and Cole (1998) 3–15. Of these, Minyard is the most wide-ranging; as its sub-title implies, it seeks to locate the poem in a context wider than the political, although the focus is very much on political ideas and, in Caesar's case, action. Minyard sees the poem as offering a radical redefinition of the values enshrined in the *mos maiorum*; it is part of what he terms "the intellectual crisis of the Late Republic" (35), the recognition that "the inherited system was corrupt and meaningless" (22). Catullus and Caesar are also engaged in this process of redefinition, but in very different ways. Grimal likewise seeks to place Lucretius in a wider context; on the political side he would have Lucretius alluding to the fears engendered in Rome by the defeat of Crassus at Carrhae and the revolts of Ambiorix and others in Gaul in 53. Fowler discusses ways in which Lucretius alludes to contemporary Roman politics in somewhat general terms, focusing particularly on the pursuit of office via the *cursus honorum*. In this context he adduces Lucretius' allegorization of the Sisyphus myth at 3.995–1002, which he claims as the poem's "most direct reference to contemporary political life" (140). Nowhere is any of the triumvirs mentioned. Cole also argues allegorically, suggesting that Venus and Mars in the prologue stand for Julia and Pompey, Julia as descendant (via her father) of Venus and Pompey as the Roman Mars. Nichols (1976), despite its title and its acknowledgement of the importance of the Memmius address at 1.41–5, has virtually nothing specific to say about Lucretius' relation to the contemporary political scene and so does not really merit inclusion in this list. The godfather of these studies is of course Farrington (1939) 172–216, who concentrates on the issue of *religio* as a means of social control.

³ The most detailed account of Memmius' career is Münzer (1931) 609–19. That this is the Memmius to whom Lucretius' poem is addressed is almost universally accepted.

the leading conservative political theorists of the day,⁴ and the fact that embedded within this text are clearly discernible allusions to the ways in which the triumvirs promoted their image to the Roman populace, and we see that its engagement with the politics of its time is not just deep but fundamental. Its espousal and advocacy of Epicureanism is not as many have seen it an impassioned statement of personal belief,⁵ but a carefully crafted work of art that sets up an ideology antithetical to that of the heroic value system of Homer and his self-professed acolyte, Ennius,⁶ which in Lucretius' world manifested itself in the "great man" view of history and the doctrine of ever-expanding *imperium*. Well before the establishment of what we know as *the* principate, Rome was already imperial, and there was no shortage of individuals vying for recognition as *princeps*, "number one man". The poets of the 50s, Lucretius and Catullus, both have plenty to say about and to such people and about the way things are in such a world.

That Lucretius is to be regarded as a poet of the 50s I take as axiomatic.⁷ It seems to me that Memmius' trial and conviction for bribery in late 54 has to be the *terminus ante quem* for the completion of the poem as we have it; while Lucretius may be consciously ironic in his choice of addressee (picking one whose observed behavior is quite antithetical to the lifestyle the poem appears to be advocating), it is highly improbable that he would be attributing that quintessentially political undertaking to "be there for the common good" (*nec...communi desse saluti*, 1.42–3) to someone whose political ambition was already dead in the water.⁸ Cicero's letter to his brother Quintus of February 54, in which he speaks of them both having read *Lucreti poemata* (Cic.

⁴ For the relationship between the *DRN* and Cicero's *De Re Publica*, see Penwill (1995) 68–91.

⁵ See, e.g., Kenney (1971) 1; Smith (1982) xlv.

⁶ On Ennius and Homer cf. Dominik (1993) 37–58, esp. 38–44.

⁷ Needless to say, I am not convinced by the argument of Hutchinson (2001) 150–62 (following Canfora [1993]) that the *DRN* was a product of the early 40s (specifically the period between March 49 and August 48). I do not have space to engage in a detailed refutation here; suffice it to say that one of Hutchinson's chief points, that the phrase *patriai tempore iniquo* ("the troubled time of our fatherland," 1.41) could only refer to the situation after the outbreak of civil war rather than before it, lacks conviction; there were many events in Roman political life of the early to mid-50s which might occasion such a description (see, e.g., the comment of Cicero on the violence employed by Pompey and Crassus to "dissuade" Domitius from standing in the consular elections of 56 [*Att.* 4.8b.2]). It also creates major problems with Lucretius' use of Memmius as addressee, which require some creative biographical speculation to overcome.

⁸ Hence I cannot accept Grimal's thesis either ([1978] 234–46); 53 is too late.

Q. Fr. 2.9.3), suggests that the poem was at a well-advanced stage early in the year; and if we trust Jerome to the extent of believing that the poem was unfinished at the time of the poet's death (*Chron. Eus. ad* 94 BCE),⁹ it would only have been so in the sense that it had not received its final polish. Given the monumental nature of the *De Rerum Natura* and the care which went into its writing, it is likely to have been the product of several years' work, a period which would have included the political machinations in Rome out of which the triumvirate arose, the construction of Pompey's theater and the first years of Caesar's Gallic campaigns.

The prologue (1.1–126) is (naturally) where it all starts.¹⁰ It begins with the famous hymn to Venus, in which the goddess is addressed as *Aeneadam genetrix* ("mother of Aeneas' descendants," 1.1); it continues with a prayer to this same goddess both to grant *lepos* ("grace") to Lucretius' poem and to exercise her power over the god of war in order to bring peace to the Roman world; then after a summary of what the poem will contain it continues with a celebration of the triumph of an unnamed *Graius homo* ("man of Greece") over the forces of *religio*;¹¹ and concludes with an emotional representation of the sacrifice of Iphigenia as an example of the evil actions to which *religio* can give rise. All these elements of the prologue can be related to the politics

⁹ Cited by Bailey (1947) 1.1.

¹⁰ Those who have recently essayed again the task of writing on it are now forced to concede that "the bibliography... is too voluminous to cite" (Gale [1994] 208 n. 2; similarly Sedley [1998] 15 n. 64).

¹¹ Smith (1982) 8 n. *a* is adamant that this word should be translated as "superstition". In fact it means "religion" (so Nichols [1976] 18 n. 8 *et passim*). There is a perfectly good Latin word for "superstition," and that is *superstitio*, as used by the Epicurean Velleius at Cic. *ND* 1.45 and readily incorporable within the Latin hexameter (as at, e.g., Hor. *Sat.* 2.3.79 and Virg. *Aen.* 12.817). *Religio* is explicitly distinguished from *superstitio* by the Stoic Balbus at Cic. *ND* 2.71; what Lucretius is doing here is destroying that distinction. For him religion *is* superstition. It is not true to say that the Epicureans were not opposed to religion (Smith *loc. cit.*); religion "binds" us with its knots (*artis... nodis*, *DRN* 1.931–2) to a false view about the gods and their relation to us which we must "spit out" (*respuit*, *DRN* 6.68). The choice for Lucretius as for Velleius is between *religio* and true *pietas* (*DRN* 5.1203; cf. Cic. *ND* 1.45; see Penwill [2000a] 23, 24–5, 33–4), not between *religio* and *superstitio*. To insist on translating *religio* as "superstition" is a serious error, because it suggests that "religion" is something different. (It is as bad as translating Lucretius' various expressions for primary particles as "atoms," but that is another story.) It is thematically important that Epicurus' victory is over religion, because traditional Roman religion underwrites the *triumphator* and the doctrine of imperialism (cf. the *supplicationes* celebrated at Rome for Caesar's victories in Gaul referred to in the next paragraph). And it may not be irrelevant to remind ourselves that Caesar was *pontifex maximus*.

of the 50s; in particular, to the period between Pompey's triumph in September 61 and the collapse of Memmius' campaign for the consulship in October/November 54.

Caesar and Gaul: A Commentary

The fact that Caesar was campaigning—and successfully campaigning—in Gaul was not something anyone living or working in Rome was likely to miss. Peter Wiseman has argued that each of the first four books of what we know as the *De Bello Gallico* was dispatched to Rome at the end of each campaigning season from 58 through to 55 for reading to the populace at large.¹² And there were the *supplicationes*. As Caesar himself records (*Gal.* 2.35.4), a *supplicatio* of an unprecedented 15 days length was decreed by the Senate after the campaigning season of 57 BCE in recognition of his achievements, and this was followed by one of even greater length at the end of 55 BCE (*Gal.* 4.38.5). Indeed the *supplicatio* of 57 might well have suggested that the conquest had been all but completed in the remarkably brief period of two years (58–57 BCE), an idea forcefully put to the Senate by Cicero in a blatantly pro-Caesarian passage of the *De Provinciis Consularibus* in the early summer of 56 (*Prov. cons.* 33–4).

In light of this, let us look at the passage from Lucretius' prologue celebrating the achievements of his *Graius homo* ("man of Greece"):

humana ante oculos foede cum uita iaceret
 in terris oppressa graui sub religione,
 quae caput a caeli regionibus ostendebat
 horribili super aspectu mortalibus instans,
 primum Graius homo mortalis tollere contra
 est oculos ausus primusque obsistere contra,
 quem neque fama deum nec fulmina nec minitanti
 murmure compressit caelum, sed eo magis acrem
 inritat animi uirtutem, effringere ut arta
 naturae primus portarum claustra cupiret.
 ergo uiuida uis animi peruicit, et extra
 processit longe flammantia moenia mundi
 atque omne immensum peragrauit mente animoque,
 unde refert nobis uictor quid possit oriri,
 quid nequeat, finita potestas denique cuique

¹² Wiseman (1998) 1–9.

quanam sit ratione atque alte terminus haerens.
quare religio pedibus subiecta uicissim
obteritur, nos exaequat uictoria caelo.

(Lucr. *DRN* 1.62–79)

When human life on earth was disgracefully brought down before our eyes, overwhelmed under the heavy hand of religion, which displayed its head from the regions of the sky, looming over mortals with appalling aspect, the first who dared raise mortal eyes against and stand up to it was a man of Greece.¹³ Neither the reputation of the gods, nor thunderbolts, nor the sky with threatening growl subdued him; instead they aroused the courage of his mind the more keenly, so that he craved to be first to smash through the tightly-fastened bars of nature's gates. And so the vital force of his mind won through, and he advanced far beyond the flaming ramparts of the world and with mind and intellect traversed the immeasurable whole. From there he brought back for us knowledge of what can come to be and what cannot, and by what principle the power of each thing is delimited, having its deep-set boundary-stone. Wherefore religion is in its turn cast down and trampled beneath our feet, and his victory makes us the equal of heaven.

The literary allusion here is to Hector smashing through the gates of the Achaean encampment at the end of *Iliad* 12;¹⁴ but there is a contemporary reference, too. The details in Lucretius' representation of Epicurus' heroic campaign against religion seem deliberately designed to resonate with Caesar's own account of his Gallic wars. There is in the first couplet a strong sense of seeking to avenge a previous defeat

¹³ *Graius homo* is a highly charged phrase. Not only does it emphatically maintain this conqueror's anonymity (in contrast to the self-assertiveness of Caesar's much-remarked third person narrative), but it also recalls a celebrated line of Ennius. As noted by Bailey (1947) 1.610–11 and others, *Graius homo* is an Ennian phrase (*nauos repertus homo, Graio patre, Graius homo, rex*, "an energetic man was found, a Greek man, with a Greek father, a king," *Ann.* 165 Skutsch [1985]), and the "man of Greece" is Pyrrhus. Through intertextuality as well as meaning the phrase adumbrates the contrast between intellectual and military conquest that is so significant a feature of *DRN* 1.

¹⁴ Hardie (1986) 210–11, followed by Gale (1994) 43–5, relates this passage to the Gigantomachy ("The Epicureans are thus associated with the Giants," Gale [1994] 43). But such an association, with its connotations of *nefas* (not to mention failure), must be seen as one of the *uatum terroloqua dicta* ("terrifying utterances of priests/traditional poets," *DRN* 1.102–3) that Lucretius says prevent humankind from achieving the truth; and so we should rather be fighting against it. In fact the basic image is not that of the Gigantomachy but of a military campaign (cf. Lenaghan [1967] 237 n. 50: "Military vocabulary dominates," *apropos* this passage; cf. also Davies [1931] 33–5). Graca (1989) 5 cites Enn. *Ann.* 225–6 Skutsch (1985) (*postquam Discordia taetra/belli ferratos postes portasque refregit*, "after repulsive Discord had broken down the iron-clad posts and gates of war") as the text to which Lucretius is alluding. But it would seem odd for Lucretius to be linking his Greek hero with a negative force like Discord; we are talking victory here, not the unleashing of violence.

which has brought disgrace to the conquered (*humana... uita cum foede iaceret*, “when human life was disgracefully brought down”).¹⁵ The subjugation of the human race to *religio* is represented in book 5 as an historical event, as something that happened at a particular point in the development of civilization, and something for which there is a causal explanation (see 5.1161–240). Here too we find reference to the menace of thunderbolts (1218–25) and celestial phenomena in general (1204–17). Ignorance (*rationis egestas*, 1211) was the weakness which allowed religion to gain its supremacy; incapable of providing any rational explanation for these terrifying events, the human race ascribed them to the gods, thereafter spending their lives in the same fear as one would have of a hostile occupation force. People and kings alike tremble:

non populi gentesque tremunt, regesque superbi
corripiunt diuum percussi membra timore,
ne quod ob admissum foede dictumue superbe
poenarum graue sit soluendi tempus adactum?

(Lucr. *DRN* 5.1222–5)

Do not peoples and nations tremble, and proud kings contract their limbs, convulsed by fear of the gods, lest on account of some evil deed or proud utterance the time has come for paying the penalty?

The disgrace is shared by the Roman nation, too:

usque adeo res humanas uis abdita quaedam
obterit, et pulchros fascis saeuasque secures
proculcare ac ludibrio sibi habere uidetur.

(Lucr. *DRN* 5.1233–5)

That is the extent to which some hidden force tramples¹⁶ on human life and seems to crush the handsome rods and cruel axes, treating them with complete contempt.

The rods and axes associated with the highest office in the Roman republic are likewise cowed into submission by this seemingly invincible enemy. This is disgrace indeed.

There is disgrace in the history of Rome's dealings with the Gauls, too. The Alps had over the years been pierced by a series of Gallic invasions (Liv. 5.34–35.3), most famously that of 391–390 BCE which culminated in the defeat at Allia and the sack of Rome, an event

¹⁵ For this sense of *iaceo* see *OLD* s.v. 5a.

¹⁶ *Obterit* here of course echoes *obteritur* at 1.79.

alluded to by Lucretius himself at 4.682–3 (the famous story of the sacred geese). More recently there had been the fear of invasion by the Cimbri and Teutones. Before this was averted by Caesar's uncle Marius, there had been a series of disgraceful defeats of Roman armies under incompetent senatorial commanders: in 113 BCE at Noreia in Illyricum under Cn. Papirius Carbo; in 109 in the Rhone valley under the consul M. Junius Silanus; in 107 in the Garonne valley, where the Tigurini, a sub-group of the Helvetii, defeated an army commanded by the consul L. Cassius Longinus and forced the survivors to march under the yoke; and in 105, after the defeat and death of the legate M. Aemilius Scaurus, came the disaster of Arausio (Orange), where petty rivalry between the *nouus homo* consul Cn. Manlius and the aristocratic ex-consul Q. Servilius Caepio resulted in a massive Roman defeat at the hands of the Cimbri with the loss according to Livy of 80,000 soldiers and 40,000 camp-followers (Liv. *Per.* 67.2).

Caesar's representation of his actions in Gaul highlights this history of disgrace. In narrating his campaign against the Helvetii he on no less than three occasions mentions the death of Cassius, noting on the first the fact that his army had been sent under the yoke (*sub iugum missum*, *Gal.* 1.7.4) and on the second expressing satisfaction that his defeat of the Tigurini had avenged both a public and private *iniuria*:

hic pagus unus, cum domo exisset, patrum nostrorum memoria, L. Cassium consulem interfecerat et eius exercitum sub iugum miserat. ita siue casu siue consilio deorum immortalium, quae pars ciuitatis Heluetiae insignem calamitatem populo Romano intulerat, ea princeps poenas persoluit. qua in re Caesar non solum publicas sed etiam priuatas iniurias ultus est, quod eius soceri L. Pisonis auum, L. Pisonem legatum, Tigurini eodem proelio quo Cassium interfecerant.

(Caes. *Gal.* 1.12.5–7)

This one community on an expedition outside its borders had, as our fathers tell us, killed the consul L. Cassius and sent his army under a yoke. So whether by chance or by divine providence, that very part of the Helvetian nation which had inflicted a notable disaster on the Roman people was the first to pay the penalty. In this action Caesar avenged private as well as public wrongs, since the Tigurini had killed the legate L. Piso, grandfather of his father-in-law L. Piso, in the same battle in which they had killed Cassius.

Reference to this battle also figures at 1.13–14 in the negotiations between Caesar and the Helvetian chief, Divico (pointedly described as the commander of the Helvetians in the war against Cassius at 1.13.2).

Thus Lucretius represents Epicurus as doing to religion exactly what Caesar represents himself as doing in subduing the Helvetii: a wrong has been done and an avenging hero rises up to right that wrong. That which trampled is trampled in its turn; the *iniuria* involved in the killing of a consul (treading down rods and axes in Lucretius' phrase) has been rectified. A similar situation arises later in *De Bello Gallico* 1 with the Germans, who under their king Ariovistus have occupied the territory of the Aedui, friends and allies of the Roman people. But at this point a new factor enters the situation: fear. Caesar's army halts at Vesontio (Besançon) to re-provision:

ex percontatione nostrorum uocibusque Gallorum ac mercatorum, qui ingenti magnitudine corporum Germanos, incredibili uirtute atque exercitatione in armis esse praedicabant (saepe numero sese cum his congressos ne uultum quidem atque aciem oculorum dicebant ferre potuisse), tantus subito timor omnem exercitum occupauit, ut non mediocriter omnium mentes animosque perturbaret.

(Caes. *Gal.* 1.39.1)

As a result of enquiries from our men and what was said by Gauls and traders, who kept talking about the enormous physical size of the Germans, their unbelievable courage and their battle-readiness—they said that on numerous occasions when they had come up against them they had not even been able to withstand their facial features and penetrating glances—a sudden fear seized the entire army, which shook everybody's minds and spirits in no uncertain terms.

Caesar gives this fear great prominence in his narrative: the whole of 1.39 is given over to it, as it creeps over the entire force like a plague. At the end of the chapter Caesar reports being told by his staff that the troops are so demoralized that they would refuse any order to strike camp and advance. Lucretius places his *Grāius homo* in a similar situation. Religion too terrifies by its appearance: see 1.64–5 (*quae caput a caeli regionibus ostendebat/horribili super aspectu mortalibus instans*, “which displayed its head from the regions of the sky, looming over mortals with appalling aspect”). The phrase *horribili... aspectu* in particular recalls the *uultum* and *aciem oculorum* of the Germans, who tower above ordinary mortals by virtue of their *ingenti magnitudine corporum* just as *religio* looms over us from the sky.¹⁷ And just as Caesar successfully overcomes the

¹⁷ Note in this regard the emphasis on size and overwhelming strength in the account of *religio* in *DRN* 5: *mirando corporis auctu* (“of amazing bodily size,” 5.1171, of gods as perceived by primitive humanity), *magni caelestia mundi/templa* (“the heavenly regions

fear of his troops by pointing out some historical realities (including the defeat of the Cimbri and Teutones by Marius), so Epicurus overcomes our fear of the gods by pointing out the truth about what they can and cannot do. Both are portrayed as leaders who take their followers with them (note particularly the prologue to *DRN* 3); both win the confidence of their followers not just for the moment but for the whole campaign. Caesar's troops will never show the same fear again, not even when confronted with the gruesome sight of woad-wearing Britons (*Gal.* 5.14.3); Epicurus' followers likewise experience a lifetime of liberation from the tyranny of *religio*.

I suggested above that Lucretius represents the state of humankind under the oppression of *religio* as that of the inhabitants of an occupied country. This recalls the situation of the Aedui under German occupation. As Diviciacus the Aeduan chieftain explains:

Ariouistum...superbe et crudeliter imperare, obsides nobilissimi cuiusque liberos poscere et in eos omnia exempla cruciatusque edere, si qua res non ad nutum aut ad uoluntatem eius facta sit.

(Caes. *Gal.* 1.31.12)

[He said that] Ariovistus...was an overbearing and cruel ruler, demanding the children of every prominent citizen as hostages and perpetrating all kinds of punishments and tortures on them if anything was done contrary to his will and pleasure.

So great is their terror of Ariovistus that the Gallic chieftains will not express their feelings about him publicly to Caesar; the Sequani, who called the Germans into Gaul in the first place, are now so terrified that they will not even speak privately: they fear Ariovistus absent as much as if he were present, and because they have allowed the Germans into their territory they must now endure every kind of torture (*omnes cruciatus essent perferendi*, 1.32.5). The Sequani called in the Germans because they thought it would be to their advantage; now their situation is worse than anyone else's (*miseriorem et grauiorem fortunam Sequanorum quam reliquorum*, 1.32.4). The situation of human beings who posited the gods as a refuge from uncertainty is strikingly similar:

of the great world," 5.1204), *magnum...caelum* ("the great sky," 5.1221), *summa...uis* ("supreme force," 5.1226), *polestates magnas* ("great powers," 5.1239), all of which lead to the same kind of demoralization (*se temunt mortalia saecula*, "the race of mortals despised themselves," 5.1238) as Caesar describes afflicting his troops.

ergo perfugium sibi habebant omnia diuis
tradere et illorum nutu facere omnia flecti

.....
o genus infelix humanum, talia diuis
cum tribuit facta atque iras adiunxit acerbas!
quantos tum gemitus ipsi sibi, quantaque nobis
uolnera, quas lacrimas peperere minoribu' nostris!

(Lucr. *DRN* 5.1186–7, 1194–7)

So they took refuge for themselves in ascribing all things to the gods and making all things turn according to their will... How wretched a race humankind is, now that it has attributed such deeds to the gods and added bitter wrath! Ah the groans they created for themselves, the wounds they created for us, the tears for our descendants!

Here what was thought to be to the intellectual advantage of the human race, the ability to explain how the universe worked, has opened the gates to an oppressive and cruel occupation force. The chiefs of the Aedui and Sequani are like the kings of 5.1222–5, convulsed by fear that a dire penalty will be imposed on them for doing or saying the wrong thing.

The goal of Caesar's campaign was to secure the northern frontier and prevent any recurrence of the threatened invasion by the Cimbri and Teutones of the previous generation. The goal of Epicurus' campaign is to secure safety from another constantly threatening enemy: *religio*. In our passage, *religio* is represented as strategically occupying "the regions of the sky" (*caeli regionibus*, 64). As any military commander knows, occupying the high ground gives you a great tactical advantage; taking control of the acropolis or high point of a city is also standard practice for a force of occupation. It was what the Gauls when they took Rome in 390 signally failed to do, thanks to the sacred geese. In order to defend humanity from this threat, Epicurus, like Caesar, embarks on a campaign of conquest that takes him right into the enemy heartland: just as Caesar takes his army across the Alps in spite of resistance from local tribesmen occupying *loci superiores* (*Gal.* 1.10) to counter the menace posed by the Helvetian migration, so Epicurus defies the menaces of received religion to "smash through the tightly-fastened bars of nature's gates" (*effringere ut arta/naturae...portarum claustra cupiret*, 70–1) and proceed "far beyond the flaming ramparts of the world" (*extra/processit longe flammantia moenia mundi*, 72–3) to put these bogeys in their place; and just as Caesar's achievement is to fix the boundary of Roman *imperium* at the English Channel and the Rhine, so Epicurus' invasion of heaven and

the infinite space beyond fixes for ever the boundary between what is possible and what is not (74–7).¹⁸

These allusions to Caesar's narrative suggest that Lucretius is inviting us to compare the achievements of Caesar with those of Epicurus, to the obvious detriment of the former. Cicero may claim that the incorporation of Gaul into the Roman *imperium* means that *nunc denique est perfectum* ("now at last it is complete," Cic. *Prov. cons.* 33 *fin.*); but in fact earthbound conquerors will never reach the limits. There are always new borderlands with potential enemies beyond and so new boundaries to cross. Caesar does both in book 4 of *De Bello Gallico*: he builds a bridge across the Rhine to campaign in Germany at 4.16–19; he sails across the English Channel to campaign in Britain at 4.20–36. In the case of the philosopher, once the *moenia mundi* have been breached there is nothing more to do. This conquest is complete; everything, the entire universe, falls within the compass of the individual intellect. The measure of his achievement is highlighted in the prologue to *De Rerum Natura* 3: *sic natura tua ui/tam manifesta patens ex omni parte resecta est* ("Thus Nature by your strength lies open and exposed, uncovered on every side," 29–30). That is all there is. There are no more nooks and crannies, no more boundaries beyond which the spirits of the dead or vengeful gods may be lurking. The infinite universe is there before you, operating according to defined processes, the deep-set boundary stone (*terminus alle haerens*) fixed immovably forever. What cannot exist never existed and never will exist: *eadem sunt omnia semper* (3.945); all things, always, the same. The quest for military/political world-domination on the other hand is doomed to endless frustration:

sed dum abest quod auemus, id exsuperare uidetur
cetera; post aliud, cum contigit illud, auemus,
et sitis aequa tenet uitai semper hiantis.

(Lucr. *DRN* 3.1082–4)

¹⁸ This in fact forms part of Epicurus' report on his victories (*unde refert nobis uictor*, 1.75). As Kennedy (2002) 108 remarks, "like a conquering Roman general, he [Epicurus] sends home reports about the regions he has conquered." Thus the link between Caesar and the *Gratus homo* even extends to the composition of *commentarii* (which in Epicurus' case are the thirty-seven books of *On Nature*). That this is the sense of *refert* rather than the more literal "bring back" of spoils, as suggested by Bailey (1947) 2.612 and Godwin (2000) 35 (*OLD s.v.* 5a as opposed to 1b), is shown by the fact that it is followed by an indirect question.

While we do not possess what we crave, that seems to surpass everything else; but after we have got that, we crave something else; our mouths always agape, an unvarying thirst for life possesses us.

Plutarch's image of the restless Caesar casting around for new boundaries to cross and new lands to conquer fits well with this picture; having outdone all his rivals, he becomes a rival of himself (ζῆλος αὐτοῦ, Plut. *Caes.* 58.2–5): Parthia, the Black Sea, the Caucasus, the Caspian Sea, Scythia, Germany, an empire bounded on all sides by Ocean: Caesarian expansionism can never rest content.

The Altar of Ambition

There is allusion to Caesar in another of the images which Lucretius presents in his prologue, the sacrifice of Iphigenia:

quod contra saepius illa
religio peperit scelerosa atque impia facta:
Aulide quo pacto Triviai uirginis aram
Iphianassai turparunt sanguine foede
ductores Danaum delecti, prima uirorum.
cui simul infula uirgineos circumdata comptus
ex utraque pari malarum parte profusast,
et maestum simul ante aras adstare parentem
sensit et hunc propter ferrum celare ministros
aspectuque suo lacrimas effundere ciuis,
muta metu terram genibus summissa petebat.
nec miserae prodesse in tali tempore quibat
quod patrio princeps donarat nomine regem;
nam sublata uirum manibus tremibundaque ad aras
deductast, non ut sollemni more sacrorum
perfecto posset claro comitari Hymenaeo,
sed casta incestu nubendi tempore in ipso
hostia concideret mactatu maesta parentis—
exitus ut classi felix faustusque daretur.
tantum religio potuit suadere malorum.

(Lucr. *DRN* 1.82–101)

On the contrary, that very religion has more often propagated criminal and impious deeds: as for example at Aulis when the chosen leaders of the Danaans, the army's *crème de la crème*, disgracefully stained the altar of the Maiden Goddess of Crossways with the blood of Iphianassa. As soon as the woollen band was tied around her virginally styled hair, hanging down from each of her cheeks in equal lengths, and as soon as she noticed her father standing sadly in front of the altars and alongside him his assistants concealing the knife, noticed too that the citizens were shedding tears at the sight of her, speechless with terror she sank down and struck the

ground with her knees. In such circumstances it could not help the poor girl at all that she had been the first to bestow the title of 'father' on the king; for lifted up by the hands of men she was conducted trembling to the altars, not so that after the rites had been completed according to solemn custom she could be accompanied by the clear-sounding wedding song, but so that herself pure she might impurely fall at the very time she should be married as an unhappy victim sacrificed by her father: all so that a happy and propitious departure might be granted to the fleet. That's the level of evil that religion has been capable of leading us to.

Ostensibly this is designed to show that abandoning the false beliefs of *religio* is not impiety; in fact *religio* itself has caused human beings to perform acts of gross impiety, and the sacrifice of Iphigenia by her father Agamemnon is cited as a prime example of this. But it is an interesting example to choose. *Religio* was not the only factor at work here: Diana may have demanded the sacrifice of Iphigenia in order to allow Agamemnon's fleet to sail to Troy, but as the *parodos* to Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* makes clear, Agamemnon had a choice. What causes him to sacrifice his daughter is not a demand imposed by religious belief (as would have been the case for example with Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac in *Genesis* if Yahweh had not intervened to stop it; see *Genesis* 22.1–14); rather it is his ambition to be the conqueror of Troy, a fact emphasized in the final line of Lucretius' description: *exitus ut classi felix faustusque daretur* ("[all this happened] so that a happy and propitious departure might be granted to the fleet," 1.100). There is no hint in Lucretius' description of Iphigenia as the heroic self-immolator of Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*, the model for Ennius' version of the story;¹⁹ this Iphigenia is very much an Aeschylean victim, underscored as such by clear Aeschylean allusion.²⁰ In 59 BCE, the year of Caesar's

¹⁹ See Jocelyn (1967) 318–9. The Ennian version is alluded to at Cic. *Tusc.* 1.116. Godwin (1998) 144–6 strangely asserts that "closer... to Lucretius [than Aeschylus] is Euripides," but the passages he cites tend to prove the opposite.

²⁰ Note especially the narratorial comment in both cases, where the Argive elders' severely critical attitude to Agamemnon's decision (δυσσεβῆ... ἄνακτον ἀνέρον, "impious, guilt-stained, unholy," *Ag.* 219–20) is echoed in Lucretius' general point that *religio* has engendered *scelerata atque impia facta* ("criminal and impious deeds," *DRN* 1.83), in both cases underscoring the paradox that to follow divine injunction leads to committing a sinful act. Other echoes: προτέλεια ναῶν ("preliminary sacrifice on behalf of the ships," *Ag.* 227), cf. *exitus ut classi felix faustusque daretur* ("so that a happy and propitious departure might be granted to the fleet," *DRN* 1.100); ὑπερθε βομοῦ... προνοπή λαβεῖν ἀέρδην ("[He ordered them] to lift her high over the altar face-downward", *Ag.* 232–5), cf. *sublata uirum manibus* ("lifted up by the hands of men," *DRN* 1.95); and κληδόνας πατρώους ("her cries of 'father,'" *Ag.* 228), cf. *patrio princeps donarat nomine regem* ("that she had been the first to bestow the title of 'father' on the king," *DRN*

consulship, Caesar's daughter Julia was within a few days of marrying her fiancé Q. Servilius Caepio, grandson of the loser at Arausio, brother of Caesar's long-time mistress Servilia (and interestingly enough the adoptive father of Brutus). In order to further his political ambitions, Caesar decided to cancel her engagement to Caepio and make her marry Pompey instead. Pompey's infatuation with his young [fourth] wife (he was 47, she a young teenager)²¹ was the talk of the town as Plutarch records (*Pomp.* 48.5, 53.1), which suggests that Caesar's awareness of his triumviral colleague's sexual interest was a factor in this decision.²² The older Pompey seems to have had a weakness for young girls: Cornelia too raised eyebrows as being young enough to be his daughter (Plut. *Pomp.* 55), and it may be that this aspect of Pompey's character is another contemporary target of Lucretius' satirical treatment of the besotted lover in the closing section of book 4.²³ Here in book 1 the motif of 'sacrificing one's daughter to further one's ambitions' makes an obvious link between Lucretius' choice of *exemplum* and Caesar's political machinations, one made the more poignant by the fact that Julia died giving birth to the couple's first child in the summer of 54. Agamemnon could not go to Troy without appeasing Artemis; Caesar could not go to Gaul without shoring up a powerful political alliance in Rome. And in both cases it is the first-born daughter who becomes the victim (note Lucretius' emphasis on this in lines 93–4: "in such circumstances it could not help the poor girl at all that she had been the first to bestow the title of 'father' on the king"). The circumstances of Caesar's abrupt termination of Julia's engagement to Caepio seem clearly alluded to in the *nubendi tempore in ipso* of line 98. In Iphigenia's

1.94). For a detailed analysis of the relation between Lucretius and Aeschylus, see Perutelli (1996) 197–207.

²¹ Badian (1990) 29: "Julia must have been born in the late 70s, since her first marriage was meant to be... in 59.... So she was almost certainly never seen by her father as an adult woman [namely prior to her move to another household]."

²² It may also have been a payback for his earlier affair with Pompey's third wife, Mucia, while Pompey was away in the East; if as Agamemnon he makes Pompey an Achilles by offering him his daughter, Pompey can stop calling him Aegisthus (Mucia's unfaithfulness: Plut. *Pomp.* 42.7; that it was with Caesar and Pompey's use of the Aegisthus insult: Suet. *Iul.* 50.1). Pompey was also roundly criticized for being bought off by this sexual bribe after his public distress over Mucia's adultery (Suet. *Iul.* 50.1).

²³ More on Pompey's sexual proclivities may be found at Plut. *Pomp.* 2.2–5. All this of course adds an ironic dimension to Pompey's devotion to Venus (on which see below). Obviously the principal target of *DRN* 4.1061–72 is the Catullan lover on his emotional roller-coaster (on the links between Lucretius and Catullus, cf. Lieberg [1962] 284–300; Kenney [1970] 388–91; Grimal [1978] 258–9); but it is tempting to incorporate a Magnus besotted with a teenage Julia into this schema.

case it refers merely to the fact that she ought to be getting married rather than being sacrificed (and forms the culminating point in the use of imagery drawn from the marriage ceremony in this passage which many commentators have observed); in Julia's case it will refer to the fact that she literally was "at the very moment of marriage".²⁴ Pompey and Caesar are now the *ductores...delecti, prima uirorum*, and their behavior is distressingly similar. This is where ambition and the pursuit of political *amicitia* leads;²⁵ Epicurean friendship offers a radically different alternative.

The Goddess in the Family

We come now to the hymn to Venus with which the prologue opens: *Aeneadum genetrix, hominum diuumque uoluptas, alma Venus* ("Mother of the sons of Aeneas, pleasure of men and gods, nourishing Venus," 1.1–2). The term *Aeneadae*, a Greek patronymic, is normally interpreted as a synonym for "Romans" generally, as it was by its first recorded user, T. Quinctius Flamininus, in 196 BCE (Plut. *Flam.* 12.6–7).²⁶ But strictly speaking *Aeneades* means "descendant of Aeneas," and in this sense can only properly be applied to members of the *gens Iulia*.²⁷ The Julian family set great store by their descent from Venus via Aeneas and Iulus; Venus appears on the reverse of coins issued by Sex. Julius Caesar in 94 BCE and L. Julius Caesar in 90, and on coins issued by C. Julius Caesar himself from 46 onwards. Suetonius quotes an extract from Caesar's funeral oration for his aunt Julia (Marius' widow) delivered in 69 in which he makes much of the fact that the Iulii have Venus as their ancestor (Suet. *Iul.* 6.1); according to Dio, Caesar was "completely devoted" to Venus (τό τε ὅλον τῇ τε Ἀφροδίτῃ πᾶς ἀνέκειτο) and put down his smooth complexion to the fact that she was his ancestor. Dio goes on to say:

²⁴ This may also explain why Lucretius has chosen to use the name Iphianassa rather than Iphigenia; it is the version of the name associated with offers of marriage to cement political alliances, as Homer has Agamemnon do at *Iliad* 9.145. (Lucretius clearly follows the tradition that Iphianassa in Homer is the Iphigenia in Aeschylus, rather than the one that turned Iphianassa into a fourth daughter.)

²⁵ *Amicitia* of Caesar and Pompey: Caes. *Gal.* 6.1; for Lucretius' exploitation of the contrast between political and philosophical *amicitia*, cf. Courtney (2001) 207. On political *amicitia* generally, see Syme (1939) 12–3, 157 (citing Sall. *Jug.* 31.15).

²⁶ Cf. Penwill (1995) 77.

²⁷ Cf. Cole (1998) 5–6, who speaks of the "narrower alternative meaning" of this word.

... καὶ διὰ τοῦτο καὶ γλύμμα αὐτῆς ἔνοπλον ἐφόρει, καὶ σύνθημα αὐτὴν ἐν τοῖς πλείστοις καὶ μεγίστοις κινδύνοις ἐποιεῖτο.

(Cass. Dio 43.43.3)

And because of this he used to wear a signet representing her in armour, and made her his watchword whenever he was in a particularly dangerous situation.

Caelius jokingly refers to Caesar as *Venere prognatus* in a letter to Cicero from Cisalpine Gaul in March 49 (Cic. *Fam.* 8.15.2), and Appian records that on the night before Pharsalus Caesar “called upon his ancestor Venus” and vowed to build a temple to Venus Victrix in Rome if he were to be successful (*BC* 2.68).²⁸ To begin his poem in the way he does suggests that Lucretius is targeting a descendant of Aeneas who claims a special relationship with Venus; what he also does is confront Caesar’s Venus Victrix, the goddess who serves the conqueror’s ambition, with Venus Genetrix, the source of all life and joy, the inspiration for the poem, Lucretius’ Muse (1.21–8).²⁹ This Venus is begged to overcome Mars, god of war (1.29–40); Caesar’s Venus works hand in hand with Mars. As Dio’s description shows, she is armed for combat,³⁰ a guerdon

²⁸ It is worth noting that the temple he eventually did construct in his forum in Rome was to Venus Genetrix rather than Venus Victrix, but this is unlikely to have been due to Lucretius’ influence. That the change in dedication was made at a very late stage is suggested by the evidence of Pliny (*HN* 35.45.155–6) that the statue of the goddess was still unfinished when the ceremony took place after his triple triumph in 46. The critical event that had taken place in Caesar’s life in the interim was the birth of his only (acknowledged) son, Caesarion, a consequence of his sojourn with Cleopatra in Alexandria. Cleopatra had traveled to Rome in 46 and while probably not physically present at the triumphal processions and the dedication was certainly visible enough with her royal airs and “little Caesar” to arouse considerable resentment (Cic. *Att.* 14.20.2; Cass. Dio 43.28.3). Thus the temple was to celebrate not so much the victory at Pharsalus as the fact that Caesar had now become father of a son, with all the future implications that brought with it. Significant in this regard is the fact that the temple also contained a statue of his own “Venus,” Cleopatra (App. *BC* 2.102; cf. Cass. Dio 51.22.3). (This last point is oddly ignored in the otherwise extremely thorough treatment of Caesar’s ‘Venus cult’ in Weinstock [1971] 15–8, 23–4, 80–90.) Grimal (1978) 240 asserts that the fact that Lucretius begins with an invocation to Venus Genetrix shows that he was adopting a pro-Caesarian stance; since Caesar was still very much a devotee of Venus Victrix at the time, this view simply cannot be supported.

²⁹ Cf. Sier (1998) 103. Ironically the Venus of Lucretius’ prologue is much more like the goddess described in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* (see esp. 68–74) on her way to the fateful encounter with Anchises that will engender Caesar’s ancestor; Lucretius is undoubtedly playing on this also.

³⁰ It is claimed that the Venus represented on coins issued by the Iulii Caesares earlier in the first century represent *Venus Genetrix* (see, e.g., Grueber [1910] nos. 1140–2, 1405–34; Sydenham [1952] nos. 476, 593). This is a highly dubious assumption. Venus is shown riding in a *biga* (two-horse chariot) drawn either by horses or Cupids; the

of success in war, inspiration for conquest and world-domination as she will be in the *Aeneid*.

Imaging Greatness

But Lucretius is not alluding here only to Caesar. Pompey too had an association with Venus Victrix; there was a shrine to this very goddess at the top of Pompey's theater, which had been dedicated with an extravagant series of plays and gladiatorial shows in September 55. Indeed, one could argue that Lucretius' representation of Epicurus as a triumphant Roman general is alluding to Pompey just as much as to Caesar. Pompey had already celebrated three triumphs, the last a glittering spectacle celebrating his victories in the East which occupied two whole days in September 61³¹ and featured as model of conquered territory an enormous trophy signifying the entire inhabited world (ἡ οἰκουμένη, Cass. Dio 37.21.2) plus the general himself decked out in a cloak said to have belonged to Alexander the Great (App. *Mith.* 117).³² Buchheit³³ has suggested that Lucretius' eulogy is intended to evoke Alexander; this may have made sense if Lucretius was writing in Greek in the third century BCE, but not when he is writing in Latin in the first. But that it should refer to and challenge Pompey's representation

chariot suggests a military rather than a generative function, and is a common alternative to the *quadriga* (four-horse chariot) on coins representing Victory. Venus driving a *biga* on the coins of P. Calpurnius in the late second century (Grueber [1910] nos. 968–9) certainly has military connotations. Weinstock (1971) 84–5 suggests plausibly that the cult title “Genetrix” was invented by Caesar in the 40s to emphasize the newness of his temple and its associations. What is interesting about the coins of L. Julius Caesar (Grueber [1910] nos. 1405–34, dated to c. 90 BCE) is that Mars is on the obverse and Venus on the reverse; Lucretius' proem seeks to turn this implied order of precedence on its head as Venus is very much ‘on top’ in the Mavors-Venus vignette of *DRN* 1.31–40. The presence of Cupid on the Julian coins constitutes a reminder that both he and the moneyers are descendants of the goddess; cf. the Cupid on the Prima Porta Augustus.

³¹ For an evocative description of this triumph based on a variety of ancient sources see Greenhalgh (1980) 168–76. See also Boyle (2006) 156–7.

³² This of course is part of the image. For Pompey's superficial physical resemblance to Alexander (and the fact that he was not resistant to being so viewed) see Plut. *Pomp.* 2.1–2. At *Pomp.* 46.1 Plutarch refers to those who “liken him to Alexander in every respect,” suggesting that the image Pompey projected along with his acceptance of the sobriquet *Magnus* had taken hold. For Plutarch, however, the true Roman counterpart to Alexander was Caesar. (On Caesar's Alexandrian ambitions see Luc. 10.17–46; Suet. *Iul.* 7.1.)

³³ See Buchheit (1971) 309–23. Cf. Fowler (2000) 187.

of himself as Roman Alexander makes a lot of sense. The whole of book 1 of the *De Rerum Natura* is structured as a rival triumphal procession,³⁴ celebrating the victory over *religio* by parading the victor in his chariot (the praise of the *Graius homo* that we have been examining), the soldiers marching behind him in the form of the arguments for the fundamentals of Epicurean physics,³⁵ the defeated prisoners in the form of Heraclitus, Empedocles and Anaxagoras,³⁶ and in the last 200 lines of the book a model of the territory which this conquering hero has brought under our control: not the puny οἰκουμένη but the *omne immensum* or infinite universe, all there is, everything, the entire, boundless infinitude of space and matter.³⁷ And the divinity who presides over this is not Jupiter Optimus Maximus in whose honor the Roman triumph was held and who according to traditional belief ultimately underpinned the safety and prosperity of the state, nor Venus Victrix to whom the warlords vowed temples in thanksgiving for their victories, but Venus Genetrix, the goddess associated with growth, fertility and joy, *natura* in her creative aspect, to be venerated as 1.44–9 remind us as an Epicurean goddess should be venerated.³⁸ Knowledge about the true nature of the gods is after all one of the benefits accruing to the human race as a consequence of our hero's universal conquest.

Triumphs, however magnificently staged, are ephemeral. Pompey was intent on setting up a more long-lasting monument to his achievement. And Pompey the Great would challenge Roman tradition culturally just

³⁴ Volk (2002) 70 is inclined to dismiss this aspect of Lucretius' portrayal of Epicurus: "It seems hardly warranted to construct the poem as a narrative of the heroic conquests of Epicurus or the like." I agree that it is not a *narrative* (how could it be?) but it is an important *image*. West (1969) 60 rightly dismisses the idea proposed in Davies (1931) 33–5 that 1.62–79 *by itself* images a triumphal procession; what I am contending is that book 1 *taken as a whole* constitutes such an image, of which 1.62–79 forms an integral part.

³⁵ Reminding us that the philosopher's victory is achieved *dictis, non armis* ("by arguments, not weapons," 5.50).

³⁶ Note the military imagery with which Heraclitus is introduced: *Heraclitus init quorum dux proelia primus* ("of whom Heraclitus enters the battle as number one leader," 1.638); the emphasis on the "weakness" or "softness" of the pluralists' elementary particles (1.753–8, 847–56) which render them incapable of standing up against the Epicurean ones; and the "fall" of pluralism (1.740–1). Cf. Anderson (1960a) 18.

³⁷ Gale (1998) 61 rightly observes the link between the description of the *omne immensum* and the proem's praise of Epicurus as "the *Graius homo* who had the courage and intelligence to range through the 'unbounded all' in thought." But it is not just a question of "ranging through"; it is *conquest* we are talking about here.

³⁸ Cf. Sier (1998) 105: "Lukrez sieht im traditionellen Bild von Venus einen Schimmer der Erfahrung des Göttlichen."

as he was doing politically: he would build a permanent theater, and so mark another stage in the process of Rome becoming Athens—or Alexandria. It was a huge complex.³⁹ Not only was there the theater itself with its temple of Venus Victrix, but also a portico containing numerous classic art works brought to Rome as part of the booty from his eastern campaigns, a senate house (which was to be the scene of Caesar's assassination) and a house for Pompey himself. The temple was high up in the auditorium, with rows of seats beneath it. According to Tertullian (*De Spectaculis* 10), Pompey employed the fiction that this was really a religious building rather than a theater to get around the ban on permanent theater structures that had hitherto been enforced at Rome. This creates an intriguing link with the *De Rerum Natura*. The hymn to Venus in the opening lines of the poem seems incongruous as the entry into a work in which readers are urged to abandon traditional beliefs about the gods. But in my view what Lucretius is doing is creatively subverting Pompey's fiction by replacing it with one of his own. *Your* assault on the *mos maiorum* is disguised by your pretending that it is really a temple to one of the foundation divinities of Rome; I'll play the same game by disguising *my* assault on traditional Roman belief-systems as a hymn to the same goddess, though of course in my work I celebrate her creative aspect rather than the militaristic one of your Venus Victrix.⁴⁰ And it is not only in the hymn to Venus that we see allusion to Pompey and his theater. One of the plays given at the opening ceremony was Accius' *Clytaemnestra*, a play which covered much the same ground as Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* and in which it would therefore be reasonable to suppose that the sacrifice of Iphigenia was at least mentioned. Thus the Iphigenia passage as well as alluding to Caesar's blatant use of his only daughter for political purposes will also reflect Pompey's choice of dramatic performance to celebrate his new theater: the saga of Iphigenia's death and Clytaemnestra's

³⁹ For an excellent account of the theater and the intended self-promotion entailed in both the building itself and the performances staged at the opening, see Boyle (2006) 150–2, 155–7.

⁴⁰ Here of course we have the same contrast as we saw in the case of Caesar and his devotion to Venus Victrix. Catullus too satirizes Pompey's dedication of the complex to Venus; in poem 55 the goddess is clearly exercising her influence over it, since the portico has already become a place to pick up prostitutes. Anderson (1960a) 16, 19–20 sees Venus Victrix emerging in the final section of book 4 (1058–287), but Venus there is more the instigator of Catullan passion than the Venus of the warlords. Their goddess brings success on the battlefield, not in the bedroom.

revenge watched by Venus from her temple above the tiers of human spectators: Venus who used Helen as her bribe to emerge as *uictrix* in the beauty contest judged by Paris and so started the whole chain of events which led to the catastrophic outcome for Agamemnon's family. In the *De Rerum Natura* Venus Genetrix, personified as the creative force in nature, is the first in a chain of images that culminates in one of the great crimes perpetrated in the name of *religio*: the sacrifice of Iphigenia for political advantage *nubendi tempore in ipso*, at the time of her life when she should have been joining in the joy of sex and procreation envisioned in the opening:

denique, per maria ac montis fluuiosque rapacis
frondiferasque domos auium camposque uirentis,
omnibus incutiens blandum per pectora amorem,
efficis ut cupide generatim saecula propagent.

(Lucr. *DRN* 1.17–20)

Finally, through seas and mountains and swift-flowing rivers and leafy homes of birds and green plains, by striking alluring love into all their hearts you bring it about that they eagerly bring forth generations after their kind.

This for Lucretius is the goddess who has been perverted by the ambitious warlords into Venus Victrix, “Venus win-at-all-costs,” a goddess symbolizing the seductiveness of military success both for the individuals themselves and by extension for the Roman people who regard her as their collective ancestor, *Aeneadum genetrix*. The scramble for high office and rich provinces to plunder is all linked to this symbol, and Memmius (whose family also claimed links with Venus)⁴¹ is in there with the rest, investing huge bribes in his bid to win the consular elections of 54. Politicians may talk about being in the game in order to secure *communis salus* (“the common good”),⁴² but in reality they are motivated by the twin vices of avarice and ambition (*ad summas emergere*

⁴¹ Grueber (1910) nos. 1328–56, 2421–39.

⁴² On *communis salus* as a (Ciceronian) political slogan, cf. Fowler (1989) 128 n. 38. Lucretius talks of Memmius being unable “not to be there for the common good” (*communi desse saluti*, 1.42). This phrase is appropriated by Caesar to describe Cotta during his narrative of the Belgic revolt of 54 BCE (*nulla in re communi saluti deerat*, “in no way did he [Cotta] fail to be there for the common good,” *Gal.* 5.33.) From Cicero’s letter to Quintus it would appear that Lucretius was being read by Caesar’s staff officers in the winter of 55/54, and may well have been skimmed through by Caesar himself; his use of a Lucretian expression suggests both that and the fact that Caesar in an amused way was well aware of the point that Lucretius was trying to make: Cotta’s noble gesture ends in failure, too (*Gal.* 5.37).

opes rerumque potiri, “to get more than anyone else and to take control of everything,” 2.13).

One final point of contact between the opening of the *De Rerum Natura* and Pompey’s theater is its pictorial quality. I have written elsewhere that “to enter the *De Rerum Natura* is like walking into an art gallery,”⁴³ with its images of Venus’ processional, Venus and Mars, the victorious *Graius homo* and the sacrifice of Iphigenia. The Pompeian portico which formed part of the theater complex was as I have mentioned adorned with famous works of art, and here again I think Lucretius is deliberately evoking Pompey’s architectural extravaganza. One could even suggest the names of the pictures to which Lucretius is alluding: for Venus the *Aphrodite Anadyomene* of Apelles;⁴⁴ for Venus and Mars, the version from the House of Caecilius Iucundus at Pompeii now hanging in the Museo Nazionale in Naples;⁴⁵ for the *Graius homo* the *Alexander* of Nicias the

⁴³ Penwill (1995) 76.

⁴⁴ Whether the Apelles *Anadyomene* was at any stage hung in Pompey’s portico is impossible to say; according to Strabo (14.19) it was originally in the Asklepieion on Kos but is now to be seen in the Temple of Divus Iulius in Rome. Both Pliny (35.36.91) and Strabo state that Augustus was responsible for its being there; neither says that Augustus was responsible for moving it from Kos to Rome. As one of the most famous paintings of Aphrodite in antiquity, it would be very appropriate for it to be hung in the portico of a complex that was ostensibly dedicated to Rome’s version of that goddess. We know that Pompey traveled from Lesbos to Rhodes (or vice versa) at the conclusion of his eastern campaigns (Plut. *Pomp.* 42.4–5) and Kos is in between these two islands; to stop by and remove a painting from the Asklepieion would have been a simple matter. As Plutarch’s narrative of this journey shows, he already had plans for a theater in mind; this would have been an excellent opportunity to acquire some furniture for it. The bronze Aphrodite of Praxiteles noted by Pliny (*HN* 34.19.69) will have been another acquisition from this voyage (that the “Temple of Venus” mentioned in this passage as having been destroyed by fire in Claudius’ reign is the temple of Pompey’s theater is I think shown by the reference to Claudius’ restoration of the fire-damaged theater at Suet. *Claud.* 21.1).

⁴⁵ Stenico (1963) plate 105. This seems to come closest to Lucretius’ description, though it is not exact; the god and goddess are side by side, rather than Venus being on top, but Venus seems the dominant partner. This is certainly more what Lucretius has in mind than the rather frigid version from the House of M. Lucretius Fronto (Ling [1991] plate XIA with plate 144). Venus and Mars had been present in sculpted form in Rome since the dedication of a Temple of Mars by Brutus Callaicus (cos. 138 BCE), which contained two figures by Scopas: a colossal seated statue of Mars and *Venus...nuda, Praxiteliam illam antecedens* (“a naked Venus...that surpasses the Venus of Praxiteles,” Plin. *HN* 36.4.26). That Lucretius is here alluding to a work of art is suggested by Bailey (1947) 2.599–600 and Gale (1994) 83, although they do not attempt to identify it; cf. also Kenney (1977) 24 n. 43. Cole (1998) 8 suggests (in pursuance of his theory that Venus represents Julia and Mars Pompey: cf. above, n. 2) that it may have been a sculpted tableau displayed at the wedding, but this is purely speculative. Cole’s interpretation is in any case too limiting; this is a universal symbol of the joyful, positive, creative element of the human psyche overcoming the negativity implicit in

Younger, which we know from Pliny to have actually been hung in the portico (*HN* 35.40.132); and for Iphigenia the *Sacrifice of Iphigenia* of Timanthes (described at Cic. *Orat.* 74 and Plin. *HN* 35.73), of which a version survives from the House of the Tragic Poet in Pompeii.⁴⁶ The difference between Pompey and Lucretius is that Pompey sees these masterpieces as serving the purpose for which he built his theater, works brought to Rome as a public display of Roman “success,” whereas for Lucretius they are images from which we may learn to appreciate his own poetic achievement. After all, he too is transporting a Greek masterpiece to be enshrined in Roman culture.

Scouting for Talents

Then there is Crassus. While Crassus is not targeted as directly or as pointedly in the *De Rerum Natura* as the other two members of the triumvirate, it is hard not to see him lurking behind the attacks on the accumulation of vast wealth (*ad summas emergere opes*, “to get more than anyone else,” 2.13 = 3.63) in the prologues to books 2 and 3.⁴⁷ The twin vices of *avaritia* (“greed”) and *invidia* (“envy”) on which these prologues focus are each reflected in Crassus as Plutarch portrays him, drawing attention both to his “love of wealth” (φιλοπλουτία, *Crass.* 2.1) and his “ambitious rivalry” (φιλοτιμία, *Crass.* 7.5) towards Pompey and Caesar⁴⁸ that led him eventually to that disastrous attempt to emulate

militarism, imperialism and violence. Cole dismisses the notion that the basic idea is “make love not war” (10), but in fact this may well be nearer the mark. The “eternal wound” (*aeterno... uulnere*, 1.34) by which Mars is “quite defeated” (*deictus*) universalizes the effect that the *simulacra* of beautiful bodies have on the minds of individual human beings (*mens... saucia amore* 4.1048) in a medium in which human creates god in her/his own image, the medium of art.

⁴⁶ Stenico (1963) plate 87; Ling (1991) plate 139. On the discrepancies between this version and the description in Pliny, see Ling (1991) 134.

⁴⁷ As Plutarch records (*Crass.* 2.2), Crassus began his career with 300 talents; by the time of his first consulship in 70 BCE he was worth in excess of 7,100.

⁴⁸ Envy particularly directed against Pompey: Plut. *Crass.* 6.4, 7.1–4. Cf. his snide remark about people “fond of building” (φιλοικοδόμους, Plut. *Crass.* 2.5), which it is very tempting to see as directed at Pompey’s grand edifice. Lucretius has some trenchant remarks to make about the role of *invidia* in politics at 5.1123–35; it finished off the kings (1136–40) and by implication it may finish off the triumvirs as well (cf. Grimal [1978] 262). (It has been claimed that this passage inspired the Epicurean Cassius to plot and execute the violent overthrow of Caesar: Momigliano [1941] 157.)

their military successes.⁴⁹ Preparations for the Parthian campaign would have been clearly going on during Crassus' consulship in 55 BCE; Dio records the resentment occasioned by Crassus' enrolling troops (39.39.1) and Plutarch's account shows that there was no secret about his intentions (ἦδεσαν δε πάντες, "everyone knew," *Crass.* 16.3). The "great tides of war" (*belli magnos... aestus*), fuelled by ignorance of the limit set to possession (*quia non cognouit quae sit habendi/finis*), roll on and on (*DRN* 5.1432–5). This may well lie behind those lines from the prologue to book 2 where Lucretius talks about "your legions" conducting maneuvers on the parade ground:

...tuas legiones per loca campi
feruere cum uideas belli simulacra cientis,
subsidiis magnis et equum uī constabilitas,
ornatas armis pariter pariterque animatas...
(*Lucr. DRN* 2.40–3)

...when you behold your legions seething across the positions of the plain in military exercises, strengthened with large reinforcements and a force of cavalry, their spirit equal to the arms with which they are equipped...

The phrase *tuas legiones* recalls one of Crassus' more notorious utterances, that no-one could be called rich who could not maintain an army out of his own resources (*Plut. Crass.* 2.7; *Cass. Dio* 40.27.3), and the exercises here described would well fit the preparations for the Parthian campaign (in which the cavalry were to play a major role);⁵⁰ one might even see in line 42 a reference to the reinforcements that Caesar had promised Crassus from the forces he was leading in Gaul.⁵¹ Finally, there is a specific jibe at Crassus embedded in the prologue to book 3:

⁴⁹ For Dio, Crassus' motives for embarking on the Parthian campaign were simple: desire for glory (δόξα) and profit (κέρδος) (40.12.1). This could almost be a translation of Lucretius' phrase *auarities et honorum caeca cupido* ("greed and the blind lust for honors," 3.59). Marshall (1976) 147–9 argues that the "greed" motive is exaggerated; at the same time, it was part of the contemporary perception of him that he would do anything for money (*Cic. Off.* 3.75), and it is to this that Lucretius is alluding.

⁵⁰ The usual interpretation of 2.40–3 is that they recall Caesar's troops exercising in the Campus Martius prior to his departure for Gaul in 58 (see, e.g., Bailey [1947] 2.805; Grimal [1978] 245). This is of course possible; but given that the context is an attack on the accumulation of wealth and its uselessness for acquiring peace of mind, it makes more sense if Crassus is the target.

⁵¹ These were sent directly to Syria under the command of Crassus' son Publius (*Plut. Crass.* 17.4) arriving in the winter of 54/53. If Lucretius died in 54, then obviously he could not have known of their arrival; but there is no reason why he would not have known that they had been promised.

sanguine ciuili rem conflant diuitiasque
conduplicant auidi, caedem caede accumulantes...

(Lucr. *DRN* 3.70–1)

With citizen blood they greedily rake in wealth and double their riches,
piling slaughter on slaughter...

Crassus embarked on his path to becoming the wealthiest man in Rome by acquiring at rock-bottom prices the estates of those who perished in the Sullan proscriptions (Plut. *Crass.* 2.3, 6.6–7).⁵²

Conclusion

The prologue sets the scene. The attack on the triumvirs is not full-frontal in the Catullan mode; rather, Lucretius puts a sequence of images before us and leaves us to make the appropriate connections. Having been thus primed, we are in a better position to appreciate the political message of the poem as a whole. In adopting this approach, Lucretius anticipates the methods employed by poets of the imperial period, and at least in part for the same reasons. Attacking the rich and powerful is not altogether safe (unless like Lucilius you have equally powerful protectors); Catullus got away with his blasts against Caesar, but only after formal apology (and then he was a family friend, and Caesar did have an image of clemency to project: Suet. *Iul.* 73). The prologue concludes with Lucretius pitting himself against Ennius. The triumvirs operate in an Ennian world that celebrates militarism, expansionism and personal achievement; the outward signs of success in that world are the attainment of high office, the celebration of triumphs and the accumulation of vast wealth. They also index the failure of that world. As the Roman empire expanded, it gave individuals access to wealth hitherto undreamed of; and given the way the army was constituted following the Marian reforms, it also gave them access to a military force whose loyalty was much more to their commander than to the SPQR whose standards they paraded. Not for nothing does Lucretius

⁵² Fowler (1989) 138 also relates *DRN* 3.70–1 to the Sullan proscriptions, but only as a kind of general memory in Lucretius' readership ("the Roman reader... might think especially of the Sullan proscriptions"). The reference seems to me more specific than that. The final phrase *caedem caede accumulantes* ("piling slaughter on slaughter") may well refer to the story that Crassus surreptitiously slipped into the proscription list the name of a man whose property he particularly wished to acquire (Plut. *Crass.* 6.7), thus adding to the slaughter that was already occurring.

employ the possessive *tuas* when referring to the troops exercising on the campus at 2.40; each of the triumvirs at some stage in the 50s had had troops present in or near the city either marching in triumphal procession, training for the next campaign or exerting pressure on the political process.⁵³ At 1.112–26 Lucretius accuses Ennius of promulgating a version of *rerum natura* that is false; the program of the entire poem is to refute the premises on which the Ennian world is based and so demonstrate the futility of the triumvirs' attempts to achieve security and peace of mind for themselves and for the Roman people. Politicians who claim to "be there for the common good" are deluding both themselves and the people whom they thus induce to vote for them. As 1.944–5 (= 4.19–20) shows, Lucretius' didactic voice is not directed at the *uulgus* ("ordinary people") who shy away from this assault on their theistic comfort zone; it is directed at the social/political/cultural elite. It is you who have to revise your views about *rerum natura*; and (in one of the telling alterations that Lucretius makes to his mission statement when he repeats it as the prologue to book 4),⁵⁴ when you do you will realize just how useful/advantageous it is (*persentis utilitatem*, 4.25). Even as you think you are expanding and securing it, your world is falling apart. So if you really want to achieve something useful, to "be there for the common good" as you keep saying, throw away that outdated annalistic celebration of what is proving more and more a hollow set of achievements, embrace what I have to tell you about the way you live now, let the right Venus rule and we can all live happily enjoying what the earth-garden has to offer instead of soaking it with blood in pursuit of some unattainable goal.

⁵³ In addition to the incidents outlined above, we have Pompey "filling the city with soldiers" to ensure the passage of Caesar's legislation in early 59 (Plut. *Pomp.* 48.1).

⁵⁴ *DRN* 1.949–50 reads *dum perspicis omnem/naturam rerum qua constet compta figura* ("while you survey the whole nature of things, how elegantly arranged it all is"); in 4.25 *qua constet compta figura* is replaced by *ac persentis utilitatem* ("and become aware of its usefulness"). Lucretius here employs a technique as old as Homer, who likewise used variations in repeated passages to throw emphasis on the change; a notable example being Odysseus' repetition of Agamemnon's offer to Achilles with a similarly radical change of ending (*Il.* 9.300–6).

CHAPTER FOUR

SERVING THE TIMES: CICERO AND CAESAR THE DICTATOR

Jon Hall

In 46 Julius Caesar secured for himself the post of dictator of Rome for ten years.¹ He was now in effect the sole ruler of the state, having recently defeated Pompey at Pharsalia. Pockets of armed resistance still remained in Africa and Spain, but these would be vanquished in the coming months (most notably at the battles of Thapsus and Munda). Caesar's assumption of sole power overturned the traditional framework of political relationships within the Roman aristocracy. Ambitious aristocrats such as Cicero had been raised on the republican ideal of the independent and autonomous senator, free to speak his mind in the senate and law courts. Under Caesar's dictatorship, however, significant activities in the law courts were suspended and, as we shall see, debate in the senate too operated under rather different conditions.² As I hope to show in the following discussion, the challenges that confronted Cicero under Caesar's autocracy provide some instructive parallels to the dilemmas faced by poets and politicians in the following decades; he now had to find rather different ways of writing (or pleading) politics under this new regime.

At the start of 46 Cicero found himself in an awkwardly submissive position. Having (belatedly) decided to support Pompey in the civil war, he was now residing in Rome in relative safety thanks only to Caesar's generous show of clemency.³ It seems clear enough that he was not at

¹ Cass. Dio 43.14. By February 44 he had been given the title *dictator perpetuo* (Cic. *Phil.* 2.87); see also Yavetz (1983) 38–45. In the following discussion, all ancient references are from Cicero unless stated otherwise; all dates are BCE unless indicated.

² For changed conditions in the courts, see *Att.* 12.21.5 (SB 260), 13.20.4 (SB 328); *Orat.* 148. (The abbreviation SB refers to the number assigned to each letter in the commentaries and texts of D. R. Shackleton Bailey.) As Rawson (1983) 208 notes, the membership of the senate had changed significantly from that of just five or so years earlier: many of the leading figures in late republican politics, including Pompey, Cato, Bibulus, Appius Claudius, Domitius Ahenobarbus, Curio, Milo, and Publius Clodius, were now dead. Moreover, Caesar in the coming months was to enrol a number of new members into the senate (Suet. *Iul.* 41.1).

³ See, e.g., *Att.* 11.7 (SB 218) for some of the awkward problems involved in Cicero's return to Italy. Many other Pompeians were still in exile, awaiting Caesar's permission to return.

this time psychologically prepared for serious confrontation with the dictator. He had experienced political exile in 58–57 and knew at first hand how unglamorous and unpleasant it could be. Over the next two years or so, however, his attitude towards Caesar's rule would change according to mood and circumstance. In mid- to late-September, for example, he seems to have been keen to encourage and abet Caesar's policy of *clementia* towards Pompey's supporters. In later months, however, we find signs of a growing disillusion. On still other occasions, he appears resigned to a life of political compromise.⁴ Throughout this period, however, there was one constant: his belief that Caesar's autocracy was ethically wrong. But how forcefully or explicitly he could express this dissatisfaction was a difficult matter to judge.

Freedom of Speech from 46 to 44

It is clear from Cicero's correspondence that Caesar's dictatorship significantly curtailed freedom of expression in Rome. The point is conveyed most strikingly perhaps in a letter to Cicero from Aulus Caecina (*Fam.* 6.7 [SB 237]), written in late 46 (or possibly early 45). Caecina was at this time in Sicily waiting for permission from Caesar to return to Rome.⁵ He had fought against Caesar in the civil war, and although Caesar had spared his life after the battle of Thapsus (*Caes. B Afr.* 89), the pair were still not fully reconciled. Indeed, Caecina in his letter describes some of the difficulties that confronted him in composing a recent volume that he has just sent to Cicero, in particular his need to take into consideration Caesar's possible reaction to what he was writing:

quem putas animum esse ubi secum loquitur? “hoc probabit, hoc uerbum suspiciosum est. quid si hoc muto? at uereor ne peius sit.” age uero, laudo aliquem: num offendo? cum porro reprehendam, quid si non uult?

(*Fam.* 6.7.4 [SB 237])

What do you think my state of mind is when I say to myself: “He'll approve of that. But this word may cause suspicion. What if I change it? But I'm afraid this may make matters even worse.” Now then, I praise so-and-so: am I giving offence? Again, when I criticize, what if he doesn't like it?⁶

⁴ See Cipriani (1977) 113–25 and Winterbottom (2002) 24–38 for useful discussions.

⁵ See *Fam.* 6.5 (SB 239), 6.6 (SB 234), 6.8 (SB 235) for Cicero's attempts to work for Caecina's recall.

⁶ Translations of extracts from Cicero's letters are by D. R. Shackleton Bailey (SB), with some minor alterations. Translations of other passages are my own.

This is a fascinating portrayal of anxious self-censorship, one that creates an impression of Caesar as paranoid despot closely monitoring the actions of his enemies. And in fact, with regard to Caecina at least, Caesar may well have had good reason for suspicion. During the civil war Caecina had composed a fierce diatribe against him, and Caesar at this stage seemed little inclined to forgive these insults (*Aulique Caecinae criminosissimo libro*, “by the slanderous volume of Aulus Caecina,” Suet. *Iul.* 75.5; also *Fam.* 6.7.1). He had spared Caecina’s life, but was evidently prepared to let him stew in Sicily for quite some time. Indeed, Caecina betrays elsewhere in the letter further anxiety regarding Caesar’s reaction to the new work;⁷ and he concludes the letter with a request that Cicero either keep his book from getting into general circulation or edit it so as to make it politically palatable: *quod ad librum attinet quem tibi filius dabit, peto a te ne exeat, aut ita corrigas ne mihi noceat* (“As for the book which my son will give you, I ask you not to let it get into circulation, or else to revise it in such a way that it can do me no harm,” *Fam.* 6.7.6 [SB 237]).⁸

Caecina was not the only one to feel constrained by the looming presence of Caesar and his agents. Over the next two years Cicero himself complains of the difficulty of expressing directly his thoughts on politics. He remarks, for example, in a letter to Cn. Plancius:

ego autem, si dignitas est bene de re publica sentire et bonis uiris probare quod sentias, obtineo dignitatem meam; sin autem in eo dignitas est si quod sentias aut re efficere possis aut denique libera oratione defendere, ne uestigium quidem ullum est reliquum nobis dignitatis...

(*Fam.* 4.14.1 [SB 240])

As for me, if “standing” means remaining loyal to the republic and having one’s opinions approved by honest men, then I do maintain my standing. But if it consists in the power to implement one’s beliefs, or even to speak freely in their defense, not a trace of standing is left us...⁹

⁷ Note the various nouns and verbs in the letter expressing fear (*Fam.* 6.7.1): *timori nostro*; *filius...pertimuit*; 6.7.3: *causa haec fuit timoris*; 6.7.4: *toto corpore contremesco*; *auges etiam tu mihi timorem*; in *hac igitur calumnia timoris et caecae suspicionis tormento*.

⁸ As Shackleton Bailey (1977) 402 notes, Caecina wrote at least three works: the attack on Caesar, written during the Civil War; a work that attempted to patch up relations with Caesar (apparently entitled *Querellae*); and a book (possibly on oratory) in which Cicero was not praised as heartily as might have been expected. This latter is the book that Caecina mentions in *Fam.* 6.7 as having been sent to Cicero. He also wrote a book on augury (Plin. *HN* 1.10; Sen. *Q.Nat.* 2.39).

⁹ See also *Att.* 13.20.4 (SB 328) in early July 45: *non licet scilicet sententiam suam* (“Of course, one can’t say what one thinks”).

Elsewhere too he is aware of the need to avoid offending Caesar: *sed tamen eius ipsius nulla re a me offensus est animus. est enim adhibita in ea re ipsa summa a nobis moderatio* ("Nevertheless, as far as the man himself is concerned, in no matter have I offended his sensibilities; for I have shown the greatest restraint in this respect," *Fam.* 9.16.3 [SB 190] to Papirius Paetus). The maintenance of good relations with powerful peers was of course a traditional part of republican politics; but Caesar's new position has evidently changed the social dynamics in a significant way.

It is worth taking a moment, however, to clarify what exactly the consequences of offending Caesar were perceived to be. We should certainly not imagine storm-troopers bursting into Cicero's house in the early hours of the morning to drag him off for torture and interrogation.¹⁰ But Caecina, as a defeated enemy and exile, could have had valid worries about his property and estates.¹¹ And financial loss could eventually mean loss of political and even civic status. Cicero's position, on the other hand, was rather different. He was probably secure enough in financial terms;¹² but Caesar and his cronies now monopolized access to most forms of political and social influence. Opposition could result in debilitating marginalization from these sources of power. For an aristocrat like L. Lucullus, who in the fifties had withdrawn from the political fray of the late republic to live the life of voluptuary aesthete, such a fate was scarcely catastrophic.¹³ But for Cicero, social standing (*dignitas*) depended largely on political activity and service to the *res publica* (as his remarks to Cn. Plancius above illustrate). He was thus caught in something of a bind: he resented Caesar's dictatorship; but he also did not want to deny himself all access to political influence. This tension emerges in various ways in his works of the following months.

¹⁰ Caesar's sarcastic response to the dissenting tribune Pontius Aquila in 45 suggests that his general approach to political opposition was not especially despotic (Suet. *Iul.* 78). For a broader assessment, see also Suet. *Iul.* 73, 75.

¹¹ For Caesar's need to settle his veterans and its impact on the estates of the wealthy, see *Att.* 16.16A to 16.16F (SB 407A–F); indeed Cicero feels the need to assure the exile M. Marcellus that his estates have not been touched in his absence (*Fam.* 4.7.5 [SB 230]). For Caesar's sales of confiscated property at auctions, see *Fam.* 15.17.2 (SB 214), 15.19.3 (SB 216); *Off.* 2.27.

¹² Cicero was in financial difficulties following the civil war, but received a large inheritance in early 48 that eased his problems considerably. See *Att.* 11.2.1 (SB 212) and Shatzman (1975) 410–11, 421–2.

¹³ See Keaveney (1992) 128–81.

The Politics of Praise: Cicero's Brutus and Cato

By early summer 46, Cicero had completed the *Brutus*, his treatise on the history of Roman oratory. The work takes the form of a dialogue with a fictionalized contemporary setting that features Brutus, Atticus, and Cicero himself as speakers. This contemporary context was probably chosen primarily to allow Cicero to address current debates on oratorical style in which he himself (and Brutus) had a considerable stake. But it also gives him the opportunity to pass comment (via the dramatic characters) on the political situation of Rome at the time.¹⁴

Towards the beginning of the treatise, for example, Cicero commemorates the recent death of his great oratorical rival, Hortensius Hortalus, observing: *tum [Hortensius] occidit cum lugere facilius rem publicam posset, si uiuere, quam iuuare* ("[Hortensius] died at a time when, had he lived, he would have found it easier to mourn the republic than to help it," *Brut.* 4). Since Hortensius died before the start of the civil war, the remark implicitly condemns the condition in which the republic now finds itself under Caesar's rule. But this very implicitness is important: Cicero deliberately eschews direct reference to Caesar himself; and the generalizing form of the observation provides him with a convenient refuge should one be needed. He is not attacking Caesar; he is merely lamenting the unfortunate recent travails of the republic, as any caring citizen would do.

A few sections later, Atticus specifically directs the discussion away from politics: *tum Atticus: eo, inquit, ad te animo uenimus, ut de re publica esset silentium* ("Then Atticus said: 'This was our very intention in coming to you: to avoid discussion of state affairs,'" *Brut.* 11). The remark functions in essence as a *praeteritio*: Atticus' explicit renunciation of the topic deftly draws attention to it. But this strategy also involves an element of restraint and to this extent it conveys a show of respect to Caesar. Cicero chooses to maintain a polite and diplomatic silence when he clearly could have written much more.

This is a routine that Cicero repeats later in the dialogue. At sections 150–6, Brutus discusses the talents of his contemporary Servius Sulpicius Rufus and concludes with the remark:

¹⁴ The degree of Cicero's political engagement in the *Brutus* has been much discussed by modern scholars, who, as often, have reached varying conclusions. For a summary of (mainly German) views, see Rathofer (1986) 24–32; also Narducci (1997) 99–101.

itaque doleo et illius consilio et tua uoce populum Romanum carere tam diu; quod cum per se dolendum est, tum multo magis consideranti ad quos ista non tralata sint, sed nescio quo pacto deuenerint.

(*Brut.* 157)

And so I lament the fact that the Roman people have been deprived for so long both of his counsel and of your voice. This is a thing to be regretted in itself, and much more when one considers into whose hands those tasks have not so much been transferred as somehow or other found their way.

The point has obvious political resonances. But again Atticus intervenes: *dixeram... a principio, de re publica ut sileremus; itaque faciamus. nam si isto modo uolumus singulas res desiderare, non modo querendi sed ne lugendi quidem finem reperiemus* ("I said in the beginning that we should keep silent about political matters. Let us do so; for if we want to recount our losses one by one in this way, we'll find no end not just to complaints but even to lamentations," *Brut.* 157).

Cicero's approach here neatly illustrates the opposing tensions within him during this period. These political allusions could easily have been omitted without ruining the coherence or structure of the treatise as a whole; and yet Cicero evidently feels a powerful need to voice such complaints. He cannot hold his tongue entirely. At the same time, however, he is prudent enough to mute these criticisms through the polite use of *praeteritio* (it is worth noting too that using Atticus and Brutus as mouthpieces for these remarks distances him a little further from them). Moreover, he also includes in the dialogue a highly complimentary assessment of Caesar's abilities as an orator and writer (*Brut.* 249–54). This assessment is quite probably a sincere reflection of his admiration for the dictator's literary and oratorical achievements;¹⁵ but the gracious compliment to Caesar may be partly intended as a gesture of goodwill to compensate for any irritation that the rest of the treatise provokes.¹⁶

A month or two earlier in April 46, Cato the Younger had committed suicide in the African town of Utica, following the defeat of the remaining Pompeian forces by Caesar at the battle of Thapsus (Caes. *B Afr.* 87–8). His suicide is presented by later sources as a calculated political act inspired by the Stoic precept that death is preferable to a

¹⁵ See Suet. *Iul.* 55.2, which refers to his praise of Caesar's oratorical talents in a (now lost) letter to Cornelius Nepos.

¹⁶ See also the comments of Gowing (2000) 55, 62–4 on the silences regarding contemporary politics observed in the dialogue.

life deprived of freedom by the rule of a tyrant (see, e.g., Plut. *Cat. Min.* 66–70).¹⁷ Soon after (probably in May 46) Cicero was contemplating the composition of a eulogy in honor of the dead republican hero (see *Att.* 12.4.2 [SB 240]).¹⁸

Cicero was well aware of the potential for offence that such a eulogy involved. As he ponders what to write he expresses concern to Atticus about the possible reaction of Caesar's supporters in Rome: *sed de 'Catone', πρόβλημα Ἀρχιμήδειον est. non adsequor ut scribam quod tui coniuiuae non modo libenter sed etiam aequo animo legere possint* ("Now, about the *Cato*: it's a problem for an Archimedes. I cannot come up with anything that your dinner-party friends [i.e., Hirtius, Balbus, and others] would read with equanimity, let alone enjoyment," *Att.* 12.4.2 [SB 240]). Cicero goes on to consider several ways to try to defuse the political element of the eulogy. He contemplates omitting all mention of Cato's opposition to Caesar in the senate, and concentrating solely on the impressive grandeur and consistency of his character (*grauitatem constantiamque*). But even this approach, he acknowledges, has its problems:

hoc ipsum tamen istis odiosum ἄκουσμα sit. sed uere laudari ille uir non potest nisi haec ornata sint, quod ille ea quae nunc sunt et futura uiderit et ne fierent contenderit et facta ne uideret uitam reliquerit.

(*Att.* 12.4.2 [SB 240])

And yet even this would be a hateful tale for them to hear. But that remarkable man cannot be properly praised unless the following deeds are celebrated: the way he foresaw our present situation and strove to avert it and abandoned his life rather than see these events come to pass.

Cicero is caught between political diplomacy on the one hand and a sense of duty to Cato on the other, not to mention his own integrity. Nevertheless, he eventually completed the composition in a way that satisfied his conscience. In July 46, he expresses to Atticus his satisfaction with the result: *'Cato' me quidem delectat, sed etiam Bassum Lucilium sua* ("I at any rate am pleased with my *Cato*, but then Lucilius Bassus is pleased with his compositions too," *Att.* 12.5.2 [SB 242]). The remark

¹⁷ For a full survey of the development of Cato's legend during this period, see Goar (1987) 23–49.

¹⁸ The work seems to have been suggested to him by Brutus (*Orat.* 35). Jones (1970) 188–96 asserts that it took the form of a dialogue, a view quoted approvingly by Fantham (2003) 106. The view of Kumaniecki (1970) 168–88, however, is more persuasive: the work probably took the form of a speech (*oratio*), but not one that can be classified as a traditional *laudatio funebris*. See especially the phrase *rescripta oratione* at Tac. *Ann.* 34 with reference to Caesar's *Anti-Cato*.

suggests that he has not made *too* many compromises in his treatment of Cato. Soon after, his secretary Tiro was busy producing a final version for circulation (*Fam.* 16.22.1 [SB 185]).

It is striking, however, that Cicero seems to have delayed its distribution for some six months.¹⁹ The reason was most likely Caesar's imminent return to Rome following his African campaign. Cicero seems to have deemed it prudent to suppress this potentially controversial work. Indeed, in the first few months of the dictator's stay (as we shall see further below), Cicero appears to have pursued a course of diplomatic conciliation with him. By the time Caesar hastily embarked for Spain four months or so later in order to deal with the threat of Gnaeus and Sextus Pompey, Cicero's son was even contemplating serving on his staff (*Att.* 12.7.1 [SB 244]).²⁰ To some extent, then, Cicero's decision not to circulate the *Cato* derives from calculated political strategy: his desire to work *with* Caesar on his arrival in Rome rather than against him. But it also shows once more the constraining effect of Caesar's autocracy. Cicero only feels able to publish the document once his son has been dissuaded from going to Spain and the dictator himself is safely out of Rome.²¹ Certainly by this time he also seems disillusioned by Caesar's style of government and is less willing to cooperate with it; but one has to wonder whether this disillusion alone would have provoked him to distribute the *Cato* if Caesar had stayed in the city.

Caesar's response to the eventual circulation of the eulogy was swift and vigorous. His ally Hirtius (who was with him on campaign) seems to have been the first to react. By early May 45, Cicero had received a volume (*liber*) in which Hirtius highlighted Cato's many faults: an obvious counter-blast to Cicero's own eulogy (*Att.* 12.40.1 [SB 281]).²² And Caesar's plans to compose something similar were well known at this stage (*Att.* 12.40.1 [SB 281], 12.41.4 [SB 283]). It is significant, however, that Hirtius went out of his way to treat Cicero with courtesy

¹⁹ Kumaniecki (1970) 169–71.

²⁰ On the problems of dating his departure see Gelzer (1968) 293 with n. 5; the most likely date is some time in the second intercalary month of 46; cf. Kumaniecki (1970) 171.

²¹ For the precise date of circulation (probably soon after Caesar's departure), see Kumaniecki (1970) 169 with n. 6. Caecina in Sicily had evidently received a copy of Cicero's *Orator* and knew of the controversial nature of the *Cato* by December 46 or January 45 (*Fam.* 6.7.4 [SB 237]).

²² The traveling time of about a month from Rome to Spain suggests that Hirtius did not waste much time in replying, despite the exigencies of the military campaign.

and respect. His criticisms of Cato were evidently carefully combined with fulsome praise of Cicero (*cum maximis laudibus meis*, *Att.* 12.40.1 [SB 281]). And he made a point of speaking pleasantly of the orator in a letter to Atticus written at around the same time: *et Hirtium aliquid ad te συμπαθῶς de me scripsisse facile patior (fecit enim humane)* (“And I am pleased that Hirtius has written sympathetically to you about me (it was civil of him),” *Att.* 12.44.1 [SB 285]). We can infer then that Hirtius’ pamphlet kept its focus strictly on Cato and the political conflicts in which he was involved; with an ostentatious magnanimity Hirtius made it clear that no grudge was held against Cicero personally for writing the original eulogy.

Caesar himself seems to have followed much the same approach. In August 45, Cicero finally learns of the dictator’s personal reaction to the *Cato* via a letter written to Balbus: *legi epistulam. multa de meo ‘Catone’, quo saepissime legendo se dicit copiosiore factum, Bruti ‘Catone’ lecto se sibi uisum disertum* (“I read the letter [from Caesar]. It contains a good deal about my *Cato*. He says that reading and rereading it has made him a more fluent stylist, whereas after reading Brutus’ *Cato* he began to consider himself an elegant writer,” *Att.* 13.46.2 [SB 338]). Caesar almost certainly expected these remarks to be passed on to Cicero, and they seem deliberately designed to project an image of himself as a man of generosity: he is not one to hold petty grudges. Plutarch too remarks on the courtesy with which Caesar’s response treated Cicero: καὶ γράψαντι λόγον ἐγκώμιον Κάτωνος ἀντιγράφων τόν τε λόγον αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸν βίον ὥς μάλιστα τῷ Περικλέους ἑοικότα καὶ Θηραμένους ἐπαινεῖν (“Even in his reply to the encomium of Cato that Cicero wrote, he praised Cicero’s eloquence and life as resembling most closely that of Pericles and Theramenes,” *Plut. Cic.* 39).²³

These remarks allow us to discern some of the strategies that helped to render Cicero’s own *Cato* a piece of “safe” criticism. Both he and Caesar seem to have exploited the dynamics inherent in the conventions of aristocratic courtesy. Cicero probably initiated this dynamic by punctiliously refraining from anything that could be construed as a direct criticism of Caesar. Such restraint functioned as a nod of

²³ Cf. also Caesar’s compliment recorded at *Plut. Caes.* 3. For the collected fragments of Caesar’s *Anti-Cato*, see Tschiedel (1981). *Top.* 94 (written after Caesar’s assassination) probably refers to the unfairness of Caesar’s criticisms of Cato, rather than his remarks about Cicero himself: a crucial distinction to make. *Plut. Caes.* 54 asserts that Caesar wrote the *Anti-Cato* not out of personal spite but political calculation.

respect to the dictator and helped to construct the polite fiction that Cicero was concerned merely with praise, not with blame. He thus contrives for himself at least two “outs”: first, the eulogy is not a piece of political opportunism, but a duty required of him by the traditional obligations of friendship;²⁴ second, it is concerned solely with lauding Cato, not criticizing Caesar. Caesar of course could have disputed these claims. But instead he makes the calculated decision to respond with a reciprocal display of restraint and respect. He counters Cicero’s praise of Cato with great vigor; but both he and Hirtius ostentatiously avoid direct criticisms of the orator himself. Indeed, Caesar takes this courteous charade even further by presenting an elegant compliment of the orator’s style. These polite fictions play an important part in defusing the tensions of the situation.

Some strains remained nevertheless. It is striking, for example, that Cicero’s response to Hirtius’ first counterblast to the eulogy was a cynical and calculating one. He acknowledges Hirtius’ magnanimous civility, and yet goes on to urge Atticus to disseminate the pamphlet widely, confident that its arguments will only serve to discredit the Caesarian cause even further (*Att.* 12.44.1 [SB 285]; 12.48.1 [SB 289]; 12.45.2 [SB 290]). Atticus, however, was concerned that, despite the surface civility, a significant rift was developing between Caesar and the orator. He therefore suggests (*Att.* 13.50.1 [SB 348]) that Cicero use a rather more effusive style in his letters to the dictator to try to restore their good relations. Cicero obligingly follows his advice; but even as he does so, he is painfully aware of the loss of independence that writing this kind of conciliatory missive involves. In a letter to Atticus written soon after, he notes:

ad Caesarem quam misi epistulam eius exemplum fugit me tum tibi mittere. nec id fuit quod suspicaris, ut me puderet tui ne ridicule Micyllus, nec mehercule scripsi aliter ac si πρὸς ἴσον ὁμοιόνque scriberem. bene enim existimo de illis libris, ut tibi coram. itaque scripsi et ἀκολακεύτως et tamen sic ut nihil existimem lecturum libentius.

(*Att.* 13.51.1 [SB 349])

It slipped my mind at the time to send you a copy of the letter I sent to Caesar. It was not what you suspect, that I was ashamed to let you see it in case you might think it absurdly obsequious, like that character Micyllus. On my word, I did not write otherwise than as to an equal and

²⁴ Cicero in August 45 also wrote a speech in praise of Cato’s deceased sister, Porcia, as too did Varro and Ollius (*Att.* 13.48.2 [SB 345]).

peer. I do regard that book highly, as I told you when we were together. So I wrote without flattery, but at the same time in such terms as I think will please him enormously to read.

Cicero here is anxious not to cast himself in the role of obsequious flatterer. And yet this is precisely the paradigm of power relations that Caesar's autocratic position has established. What Cicero regards as sincere compliments between equals now all too easily take on the appearance of sycophantic fawning. This a problem that would only get worse under the emperors: how was a politician to offer compliments to an autocrat without appearing obsequious?

Caesar's relatively restrained reaction to the *Cato* is all the more noteworthy when we compare it with the notorious prosecution of Cremutius Cordus in 25 CE during the reign of Tiberius (see Tac. *Ann.* 4.34–5). Cremutius too had published a work (in this case a history) which contained a eulogy of Cato and had gone so far as to call Cassius Longinus (one of the leaders of Caesar's assassination) the "last of the Romans" (*Romanorum ultimum*, Tac. *Ann.* 4.34). For this he was brought to trial before the senate, with the emperor presiding over the case (see also Cass. Dio 57.24.2).²⁵ Tacitus presents the suit as a novel and sinister development in Tiberius' autocratic rule (*nouo ac tunc primum audito crimine*): a decisive advance in the curtailment of freedom of speech under the regime. According to Tacitus (*Ann.* 4.34–5), Cremutius made a nobly defiant speech in his own defense and then went home to starve himself to death in protest. One of the precedents that Cremutius uses in his speech to argue in favor of a ruler's tolerance of opposing political opinions is precisely that of Caesar's reaction to Cicero's *Cato*: *Marci Ciceronis libro, quo Catonem caelo aequauit, quid aliud dictator Caesar quam rescripta oratione, uelut apud iudices, respondit?* ("When Cicero's book praised Cato to the skies, what did it elicit from the dictator Caesar but a written oration in reply as though it were delivered before a jury?" Tac. *Ann.* 4.34). To generations looking back, Caesar's response seemed to uphold the republican ideals of open and frank political debate where contrasting views could be aired without trepidation (see, e.g., Cass. Dio 43.13.4; cf. Tac. *Agr.* 2).

To some extent this was true. Indeed, by March 45, Brutus had written his own eulogy of Cato, which was then followed by yet another

²⁵ For useful background to the case, see Martin and Woodman (1989) 176–84.

version from the pen of Fabius Gallus (at least by August 45).²⁶ And yet, as we have seen, this is not quite the whole story. Cicero almost certainly felt unable to publish his own version while Caesar was in Rome; and Brutus and Gallus likewise took advantage of the dictator's absence for the dissemination of their pieces. This is political opposition of a sort, but not quite in the fierce, direct way in which it had been regularly conducted in the previous decades.²⁷

Writing Advice to a King

At the same time as Cicero learned of Hirtius' reaction to his *Cato*, we find him contemplating the composition of a letter of political advice to Caesar. The idea for this work seems to have come from Atticus (note the phrase *tibi enim placebat* in *Att.* 13.26.2 quoted below). Just as in August 45 we find Atticus politely suggesting to Cicero that a warmer manner in his letters to Caesar would be productive, so here he seems to be trying to direct the orator to a path that will consolidate his standing with the dictator. Perhaps Atticus does so because he senses Caesar's disapproval of the orator's recent activities and hopes to ease this tension; or perhaps he really believes that his friend can influence Caesar's policies. Whatever the case, Cicero soon ran into difficulties with the proposed project:

Συμβουλευτικὸν saepe conor. nihil reperio, et quidem mecum habeo et Ἀριστοτέλους et Θεοπόμπου πρὸς Ἀλέξανδρον. sed quid simile? illi et quae ipsis honesta essent scribebant et grata Alexandro. ecquid tu eius modi reperis? mihi quidem nihil in mentem uenit.

(*Att.* 12.40.2 [SB 281])

I make repeated attempts at a "Letter of Advice." I can come up with nothing, though I have Aristotle's and Theopompus' letters to Alexander beside me. But where is the similarity? What they wrote was both creditable to themselves and welcome to Alexander. Can you think of anything along these lines? Nothing occurs to *me*.

²⁶ On Brutus' work see *Att.* 12.21.1 (SB 260); Fabius (so Shackleton Bailey) Gallus, *Fam.* 7.24.2 (SB 260).

²⁷ We may compare perhaps Cicero's delayed circulation in 44 of his second *Philippic*, which was probably only distributed widely once Antony had left Rome in November of that year; see *Att.* 15.13.1 (SB 416). This work of course was a fiery invective, not a eulogy of a deceased opponent.

We can glimpse here the literary—rather than the political—*kudos* that Atticus was perhaps able to tempt Cicero with when he first made the suggestion: Cicero was to play Aristotle or Theopompus to Caesar's Alexander.²⁸ But Cicero faces a fundamental problem: the dictatorship runs counter to his long-held political principles. Nevertheless, despite these reservations, within the week he had put something together that he thought might be suitable:

equidem credibile non est quantum scribam, quin etiam noctibus; nihil enim somni. heri etiam effeci epistulam ad Caesarem; tibi enim placebat. quam non fuit malum scribi, si forte opus esse putares; ut quidem nunc est, nihil sane est necesse mittere. sed id quidem ut tibi uidebitur.

(*Att.* 13.26.2 [SB 286])

You would not believe how much I am writing, even at night, since I get no sleep. Yesterday I even finished the letter to Caesar, since you thought it a good thing to do. There was no harm in writing it, in case you might think it useful; but as matters stand at present there is certainly no need to send it. But in this I'll do whatever seems best to you.

Cicero's comments suggest that, to his own mind at least, he has been able to strike a balance between upholding republican ethical precepts and writing something that Caesar will appreciate: *epistulam ad Caesarem mitti uideo tibi placere. quid quaeris? mihi quoque hoc idem maxime placuit, et eo magis quod nihil est in ea nisi optimi cuius, sed ita optimi ut tempora; quibus parere omnes πολιτικοὶ praecipiunt* ("I see you like the idea of sending my letter to Caesar. Well, I liked this idea very much too, especially as it contains nothing unbecoming a loyal citizen—loyal, that is, as far as the times permit. Obedience to *them* is what all the experts on politics preach," *Att.* 12.51.2 [SB 293]). Unfortunately Balbus and Oppius did not see matters the same way.

The very fact that Cicero took the precaution of showing the letter first to Caesar's agents is itself significant (*Att.* 12.51.2 [SB 293]): again we see the anxiety that writing politics under the dictator could arouse. As Cicero notes, not to have had the letter approved beforehand could have been dangerous (*paene periculosi*, *Att.* 13.27.1 [SB 298]; see also *Att.* 13.28.2 [SB 299]). Nevertheless, it rankles when Oppius and Balbus take exception to what he has written. As Cicero tartly puts it: *illud uero uel optime, quod ita multa mutari uolunt ut mihi de integro scribendi causa non sit* ("They have done me an especially good turn by wanting so

²⁸ Compare Cicero's own tactics in his letter to Luccius at *Fam.* 5.12.7 (SB 22).

many changes that there is no point in my writing the thing afresh,” *Att.* 13.27.1 [SB 298]). His literary pride is dented, but at least he now has a good excuse to dispense with the whole project.

As far as we can tell, their main objection was that the letter did not contain enough enthusiastic praise of Caesar’s present policies (see *Att.* 13.28.3 [SB 299]: *his nostris moderatis epistulis*, “a sober letter like mine”). In particular, Cicero evidently suggested that the planned Parthian campaign should be delayed until affairs in Rome were fully settled, something that did not sit well with the dictator’s advisers (see *Att.* 13.27.1 [SB 298], 13.31.3 [SB 302]). And yet, from Cicero’s point of view, to say anything more expansive would have involved a demeaning form of sycophancy: *quod enim aliud argumentum epistulae nostrae nisi κολακεία fuit?* (“What other material was available for my letter except flattery?” *Att.* 13.27.1 [SB 298]). Indeed, having convinced himself that the whole project is a mistake, he now admits to a rather different anxiety: that Caesar could well have regarded the letter as a kind of apology for his controversial *Cato*: *atque etiam uereor ne putet me hoc quasi “Catonis” μείλιγμα esse uoluisse* (“And I am even afraid that he might think I intended this as a kind of peace offering for the *Cato*,” *Att.* 13.27.1 [SB 298]). The situation is a frustrating one all around: he is worried about giving offence, but worried too about appearing too conciliatory. At this point Cicero loses patience and rejects any thought of compromise. He refuses to re-write the letter to suit the wishes of Caesar’s flunkies and withdraws from the fray. The freedom of previous years is no longer possible; the best that he can hope for now is a dignified silence—a “semi-freedom”—where at least his political and moral principles are not compromised: *obsecro, abiciamus ista et semiliberi saltem simus; quod adsequemur et tacendo et latendo* (“I beg you, let us chuck all this nonsense, and be half free at any rate. This we shall achieve by holding our tongues and lying low,” *Att.* 13.31.3 [SB 302]).

This episode illustrates a number of important points. First, we see again the constraints imposed on political writing at this time (both in the influence of Caesar’s agents, and the anxiety created by Caesar himself). Secondly, we see Cicero trying to establish clear limits as regards the ethical compromises he will make under the dictatorship. He was not by nature a man of fanatical extremes, and whenever possible he preferred to steer a middle course; but his reaction here shows that he does have his limits. It is not clear just how Oppius and Balbus reacted to Cicero’s recalcitrance or whether they mentioned it

to Caesar.²⁹ Nevertheless, his refusal stands out as another minor form of resistance against the regime. Thirdly, it is worth noting that Cicero does not use this occasion to compose an example of figured speech. He evidently entertains only two options: to be or not to be a toady. The idea of being a subversive toady (through figured speech) does not seem to have occurred to him. This point is important when we turn to consider the public speeches that he delivered during Caesar's dictatorship.

Praising an Autocrat

In September 46, relatives and friends of M. Marcellus made a highly emotional appeal in the senate for Caesar to allow the ex-consul to return to Rome from exile in Mytilene.³⁰ The request was an ambitious one, since Marcellus had been one of Caesar's harshest critics in the years leading up to the civil war (see Suet. *Iul.* 28 for details). Caesar responded by first criticizing Marcellus' longstanding *acerbitas* towards him (*Fam.* 4.4.3 [SB 203]) and expounding at length on the dangers of pardoning such men, referring in particular to rumors then in circulation about plans to assassinate the dictator (*Marc.* 21–2). Unexpectedly, however (*praeter spem*, *Fam.* 4.4.4), he concluded by formally agreeing to allow Marcellus to return. At this point, the leading senators were asked to express their own opinions on the subject.³¹ Cicero's response was to break his self-imposed silence in the senate and deliver a speech of fulsome thanks to the dictator—the speech known to us today as *Pro Marcello*.

The speech, especially its eulogistic element, has generated considerable interpretative anxiety among modern scholars.³² If we take its praise of the dictator at face value, we have to confront the possibility of an

²⁹ Refusals could on occasion function as a political snub; see, for example, Caesar's refusal in 54 to write a letter in reply to Clodius (*Q. Fr.* 3.1.11 [SB 21]). But Cicero's refusal here is rather different in nature, since the proposed letter is not part of an exchange initiated by the dictator.

³⁰ Cicero tells us (*Fam.* 4.4.3 [SB 203]) that several of Marcellus' family fell at the dictator's feet during their plea for pity.

³¹ See Shackleton Bailey (1977) 362 for the procedure.

³² The first twenty sections of the speech laud both Caesar's military achievements and his recall of Marcellus in highly emphatic terms (see especially sections 1, 4, 9). For a discussion of the speech's epideictic elements, see von Albrecht (2003) 164–7.

essentially hypocritical Cicero, scathing in private of Caesar's actions, yet publicly sycophantic and supportive.³³ Attempts have been made to save the orator's reputation by arguing that the main thrust of the speech—its support for Caesar's policy of clemency towards Pompey's supporters—is fundamentally consistent with Cicero's wider concerns at this time. Certainly his views changed in the coming months; but both the optimism of the speech and its encouragement of Caesar's actions are not disturbingly out of line with the orator's genuine hopes and aims at this particular moment.³⁴ Another common approach (adopted by historians in particular) is to pass quickly over the speech's encomiastic element and concentrate instead on Cicero's political advice to Caesar in the final sections of the oration.³⁵ Indeed, this advice has been interpreted as fundamentally challenging to the dictator.³⁶

Other commentators have absolved Cicero from charges of fawning hypocrisy by rather different means. As a remark in the Gronovian scholia shows, several early readers had discerned in the oration a calculating use of figured speech intended to undercut its praise of Caesar.³⁷ More recently Dyer has developed this line of interpretation even further to claim that the speech is a coded call to arms addressed to Caesar's enemies in the senate.³⁸ Such claims certainly present an appealing image of Cicero as a cleverly subversive orator; but there are problems. Dyer's account of the speech is disappointing in that it fails to identify the precise linguistic strategies that Cicero uses to convey

³³ See, e.g., Weinstock (1971) 166–7, who characterizes Cicero as an enthusiastic collaborator in Caesar's ambitions. Cf. Mommsen (1889) 619 ("als Werkzeug der Monarchen"); Carcopino (1947) 370.

³⁴ See, e.g., Cipriani (1977) 113–25 and Winterbottom (2002) 24–38. As these discussions show, Cicero had strong personal and political reasons to want the return from exile of as many Pompeians as possible, and he was still relatively optimistic that the senate might regain some of its former influence. See too Cicero's letters of support and encouragement at this time to numerous exiles, e.g., *Fam.* 6.10a (SB 223), 4.13 (SB 225), 6.13 (SB 227).

³⁵ See, e.g., Heitland (1909) 348–9, who briefly acknowledges that "the fulsome praise and gratitude... read strangely"; and Stockton (1971) 272, who admits that the speech starts "awkwardly and ponderously." Cf. Gelzer (1968) 281–2; Griffin (2003a) 158–9.

³⁶ See Rambaud (1984) 47: "En somme, l'orateur élève César pour le transformer"; and most recently, von Albrecht (2003) 171: "Cicero is rather daring in his statements."

³⁷ See Stangl (1964) 295.32–296.2: *plerique putant figuratam esse istam orationem et sic exponunt, quasi plus uituperationis habeat quam laudis* ("Some believe that the speech is a 'figured' one, and interpret it as containing more criticism than praise"). The scholiast firmly rejects this interpretation: *hoc nec temporibus conuenit nec Caesar.*

³⁸ Dyer (1990) 17–30; cf. also Kerkhecker (2002).

his supposed ulterior meaning; moreover, it relies on the arbitrary assumption that the written version of the speech was not circulated by Cicero until some six months or so after its delivery.³⁹ Its argument contains further fallacies also.⁴⁰ This rather extreme view of Cicero as sly revolutionary must thus remain problematic.

Such a wide range of critical responses to a work involving a writer and an autocrat will be familiar to students of imperial literature. But perhaps the most significant feature of the *Pro Marcello* for the present discussion is the fact that the speech generated a certain anxiety in Cicero himself. This anxiety is especially evident in the account of the affair that he sends to Servius Sulpicius Rufus a month or so afterwards (*Fam.* 4.4.3–4 [SB 203]). The account incorporates a strong element of self-justification, as if Cicero was aware that his speech may have caused some surprise among his colleagues.⁴¹ In particular he underplays the fulsome language that features so prominently in the oration: *itaque pluribus uerbis egi Caesari gratias* (“so I expressed gratitude to Caesar at considerable length,” *Fam.* 4.4.4). There is a tacit acknowledgement here that his remarks veered towards the effusive end of the scale; but the colorless phrase *pluribus uerbis* allows him to skirt quickly around this awkward element of the speech.⁴²

Cicero also takes pains to depict the speech as forced upon him by the pressure of circumstance. He begins by emphasizing that up to this point he had stubbornly refused to take an active part in debates within the new Caesarian senate: *nam statueram, non mehercule inertia sed desiderio pristinae dignitatis, in perpetuum tacere* (“For I had decided to hold my peace forever, not, I assure you, out of apathy, but because of my regret at not having the standing I once enjoyed,” *Fam.* 4.4.4). There may well be a self-serving dimension to this claim; but the attitude that he describes does in fact seem to reflect the same proud concern

³⁹ As noted by Winterbottom (2002) 34.

⁴⁰ See Levene (1997) 68–9.

⁴¹ In several important ways, Servius Sulpicius’ recent experiences paralleled those of Cicero: a belated follower of Pompey in the civil war, he had lately been reconciled with Caesar and was now serving as governor of Achaia.

⁴² Social convention in the senate probably generated a far higher degree of ceremonial language than we are used to today. See, e.g., the fulsome language of M. Crassus at a meeting in 62 as reported by Cicero at *Att.* 1.14.3 (SB 14); and compare the ornately turned compliments employed by Cassius Parmensis in a formal letter to Cicero in 43 (*Fam.* 12.13.1–2 [SB 419]). Nevertheless Cicero’s phrase *pluribus uerbis* in his letter to Servius Sulpicius suggests that, whatever the prevailing conventions, he pursued them to a noteworthy extent.

with personal prestige and independence (*desiderio pristinae dignitatis*) that he shows in his refusal to rewrite his letter of advice to Caesar, and we need not doubt perhaps its essential veracity.⁴³ But the dictator's unexpected decision to pardon Marcellus now placed Cicero in a very awkward position. To persist in his sullen silence when other senators were praising Caesar so volubly (*Fam.* 4.4.4) would have been *too* provocative. As Cicero observes to Servius Sulpicius, Caesar would have taken offence if he had declined to say anything at all: *effugi eius offensionem, qui fortasse arbitraretur me hanc rem publicam non putare si perpetuo tacerem* ("I have escaped his displeasure; he might have thought I did not regard the present regime as constitutional if I remained silent forever," *Fam.* 4.4.4).

Cicero here tries to present himself as something of a reluctant participant in the whole affair. He acknowledges that he heartily approved of Caesar's decision to pardon Marcellus (*Fam.* 4.4.3) and he claims to have been impressed by Caesar's *magnitudo animi* ("generosity of spirit") and the senate's sense of duty towards Marcellus (*Fam.* 4.4.4). Nevertheless, he also affects a degree of regret about his contribution to the affair. The speech (he claims) may well have compromised his independence: *meque metuo ne etiam in ceteris rebus honesto otio priuarim, quod erat unum solacium in malis* ("And I am afraid I may have even forfeited in other contexts the respectable retirement that was my only consolation in adversity," *Fam.* 4.4.4). These professed regrets do not sit easily with his decision to circulate copies of the speech—although if Caesar had asked him for a copy soon after its delivery, it must have been difficult to refuse or to produce a more muted version than the dictator himself had heard.⁴⁴

Overall Cicero's account to Servius Sulpicius highlights the problems now raised by the business of praising Caesar in public. In the first

⁴³ There is nothing in the evidence to contradict Cicero's assertion that he maintained a silence in the senate in the summer of 46. There are some suggestions that he took an active part in senatorial deliberations in 45 (Plut. *Cic.* 40.4; *Caes.* 57.2), a view that is followed by Weinstock (1971) 203, partly on the spurious evidence of Cicero *ad Brut.* 1.16. Cicero's genuine letters, however, present a more complex picture. See in particular *Fam.* 9.15.3–4 (SB 196); also *Fam.* 13.77.1 (SB 212) and *Att.* 13.47a.1 (SB 352), which suggest that Cicero's attendance at senatorial meetings was not consistent. It is clear too that in early 45, following the death of Tullia, Cicero stayed away from Rome for some time (*Att.* 12.21.5 [SB 260], *Fam.* 5.14.1 [SB 251]). See also Cass. Dio 43.27.1.

⁴⁴ Settle (1962) 263–4 suggests that copies of the *Pro Marcello* were circulated soon after its delivery, although this assertion is based on analogy and supposition rather than specific evidence.

place, Cicero finds himself drawn into a situation that requires him afterwards to manufacture a rather distorted version of events, one that understates the speech's eulogistic element. And second, when he stood up to speak in the senate, he was faced with a quite unfamiliar rhetorical challenge: offering thanks to a dictator whose position he regarded with profound ambivalence, and who in turn viewed him with suspicion. These circumstances would have compounded even further the difficulties already inherent in the genre of eulogy in Rome. It is revealing, for example, that Aulus Caecina, in his letter to Cicero discussed above, stresses that a successful eulogy requires energy and enthusiasm from the writer: *genus autem hoc scripturae non modo liberum sed incitatum atque elatum esse debere quis ignorat?* ("Now we all know that this type of composition needs to be not just unrestrained but even excited and enthusiastic," *Fam.* 6.7.3 [SB 237]). This is not just a piece of literary advice; Caecina notes that there are serious social consequences if one does not succeed in striking the appropriate tone: *solum uero liberum alterum laudare, de quo quicquid detrahas necesse est aut infirmitati aut inuidiae adsignetur* ("Only praise of others is free from all restraint; if you hold anything back, this is always attributed to fickleness or jealousy," *Fam.* 6.7.3). This principle certainly applied to the competitive struggles for power in republican politics. But it must have been all the more relevant as Cicero prepared to speak on this particular occasion. For the dictatorship had changed the fundamental dynamics of this kind of oratorical situation. Cicero's praise of Caesar was now to be undertaken in a context of anxiety and subordination, and we should not be surprised if this context exerted a further pressure towards embellishment and overstatement. The episode thus provides an excellent example of Cicero grappling with the realities of politics under a dictator. Not only do we sense a shift in the traditional way of conducting business in the senate and the ominous influence of an autocrat; we can discern too the foundations being laid for a system of power that encourages panegyric and awkward encomium.

Conclusions

The reactions of Cicero to Caesar's dictatorship provide a fascinating case study of a politician struggling to adapt to new and unfamiliar circumstances. As we have seen, he did not have the stomach for open confrontation; but his moral conscience bridled at Caesar's regime and tempted him to minor acts of resistance. Various social and

literary mechanisms allowed him to express this opposition safely. Much depended on the sense of gentlemanly decorum that had developed between Cicero and Caesar over the previous decades. While they did not respect each other's political aims and methods, they could at least trust that they would respect the basic principles of polite courtesy. The characters in Cicero's *Brutus* lament the current state of the republic, but diplomatically choose not to pursue the subject at length. Similarly in his eulogy of Cato, Cicero seems to have managed to praise the republican martyr in a way that did not constitute an explicit or offensive attack on Caesar himself. The dictator thus responded in a manner that ostentatiously eschewed in turn any criticism of Cicero.⁴⁵

For the emperors that followed, there was evidently less room for such polite indulgence. Cicero admits to Atticus after the assassination that Caesar had in fact proved to be remarkably patient with him (*nescio quo pacto ferebat me quidem mirabiliter*, "For some reason he was remarkably patient where I was concerned," *Att.* 14.17.6 [SB 371]). This attitude was the result of decades of interaction. Caesar knew Cicero well and judged shrewdly the likely limits of his resistance. As Cicero himself remarks in a rare moment of self-effacing insight on hearing that his nephew Quintus was stirring up Caesarian acquaintances against him: *nihil autem ab eo tam ὀξιοπίστως dici quam alienissimos nos esse a Caesare, fidem nobis habendam non esse, me uero etiam cauendum* (φοβερὸν ἂν ἦν nisi uiderem scire regem me animi nihil habere) ("His most plausible claim [is] that we are thoroughly hostile to Caesar and are not to be trusted. I am said to be actually dangerous. It would be alarming if I were not well aware that our king knows me for a coward," *Att.* 13.37.2 [SB 346]). This incident suggests that Cicero's sullen acts of opposition had not gone unnoticed by those around him. In later decades, the consequences may have been rather more serious.

While Cicero prudently avoided direct confrontation with Caesar, his pride and sense of independence at times prevented him from indulging in compliant flattery or saying what he did not believe. His refusal to re-write his letter of advice to Caesar not only points to this element of self-willed pride; it also implies that Cicero was not in the habit of thinking in terms of doublespeak or of composing subtly subversive

⁴⁵ See also *Att.* 13.52 (SB 353) for an account of Caesar's meeting with Cicero on one of his estates at the end of 45; urbane manners and conversation played an important part in facilitating this encounter as well.

literature. Such a conclusion is hardly surprising. The politics of the late republic did not encourage this kind of covert criticism. Occasionally a form of figured speech might be required in order to avoid giving offence to a powerful politician such as Sulla.⁴⁶ But the practice of actively undermining those in authority through veiled language was not one that senators in the republic had been obliged to cultivate. It is the response to this problem from later generations of senators and writers that the following chapters of this volume set out to explore.⁴⁷

At the same time, Caesar's dictatorship created a new and unsettling oratorical environment to which Cicero had to adapt. As I have suggested, the effusive praise of Caesar evident in *Pro Marcello* is the cumulative result of various contextual pressures; but the very unfamiliarity of the task seems to be one of the most significant. There was certainly a strong tradition of public eulogizing in republican oratory; but to address the all-powerful victor of a civil war, aware (as Cicero was) that one's previous silences in the senate could be interpreted as a mark of hostility, was a quite different matter altogether. Again, this was the kind of challenge that later politicians under the emperors would have to grapple with more frequently than Cicero.

Finally, our discussion has highlighted the constraints imposed by Caesar's autocracy on the freedom of expression in Rome. Signs of the paranoia of those writing under the emperors make perhaps their first appearance here. Caecina composes (or so he claims) always with an eye on the possibly negative reaction of the dictator. Cicero for his part judges it wise to submit the first draft of a potentially sensitive work to Caesar's agents, who proceed to suggest significant changes. Similarly he feels unable to express in the senate his true feelings. Such constraints are unfamiliar and strike at the very core of the Roman aristocrat's desire for *dignitas* and political independence. Cicero's response was similar to that presumably adopted by many aristocrats under the emperors: he reluctantly learned to "serve the times"—a phrase that

⁴⁶ See, e.g., the (not always convincing) arguments of Bucheit (1975) 570–91.

⁴⁷ Note that in recent decades some scholars have discerned coded political opposition in Cicero's philosophical works composed before the Ides of March 44: see especially Strasburger (1990); Wassmann (1996); and Monteleone (2003) 107–322. Space does not allow a full discussion of the issues here; for some of the problems that these interpretations involve, see, e.g., Bringmann (1993) 168–70; Christ (1994) 206–13; and Hall (2005) 113–15.

he wryly uses in a letter to M. Terentius Varro.⁴⁸ This course of action at times stuck in Cicero's craw; but it is worth recalling in this context Tacitus' praise of Agricola's conduct during the rule of Domitian:

sciant, quibus moris est inlicita mirari, posse etiam sub malis principibus magnos uiros esse, obsequiumque ac modestiam, si industria ac uigor adsint, eo laudis excedere, quo plerique per abrupta, sed in nullum rei publicae usum nisi ambitiosa morte inclaruerunt.

(Tac. *Agr.* 42)

Let it be known to those inclined to admire rebellious acts, that great men may exist even under bad emperors, and that compliance and submission, when joined to activity and energy, may attain a glory which most men reach only by a perilous career, one that is utterly useless to the state and that gains fame only by an ostentatious death.

Cautious, if resentful, diplomacy was the shrewd course for Cicero too during Caesar's dictatorship. He attended meetings of the senate but refrained from speaking unless absolutely necessary. He socialized with leading Caesarians, but despaired of the republic in letters to other more sympathetic friends. He composed works that hinted at his dissatisfaction with Caesar's rule, but did so in a restrained and respectful manner. In all this, however, he had the advantage of having already achieved the rank of consul. His withdrawal from public life and its consequent compromises came towards the end of a successful political and literary career; ambitious writers and aristocrats in succeeding generations did not have this advantage. They had to find other ways to address the trials and frustrations of living under an autocrat.

⁴⁸ *Fam.* 9.7.1 (SB 178); cf. *Fam.* 9.18.2 (SB 191) and 9.26.1 (SB 197) to Papirius Pactus; *Att.* 11.21.3 (SB 236). See also Servius Sulpicius Rufus at *Fam.* 4.5.6 (SB 248).

CHAPTER FIVE

VERGIL'S GEOPOLITICS

William J. Dominik

Throughout the *Eclogues*, the *Georgics*, and the *Aeneid*, Vergil's geopolitics are at work as a pervasive influence upon their readers. In Vergil geopolitics not only involves political activity that takes place in a geographical space but also the causal relationships that exist between political power and imperial space. My application of geopolitics involves this nexus of political and geographical factors but emphasizes specifically the political aspects that relate to, influence, weigh upon or literally cast their shadow upon a particular geographical space, in the case of Vergil, the countryside. Snell acknowledges that Vergil permits political matters to intrude into his Arcadia but maintains that the poet is "always careful not to get involved in the slippery problems of political action; in fact one may presume that they never even penetrated to his dreaming ear."¹ Even so, a work like the *Eclogues* is heavily political, as critics recognized during the Renaissance. In the *Defence of Poesie* Philip Sidney writes, "is the poore pipe [pastoral poetry] disdained, which sometimes out of Moelibeus mouth, can shewe the miserie of people, under hard Lords and ravening souldiers?"²

Vergil is indeed a political poet: so persistent is the intrusion of political issues and themes at every level of discourse in the *Eclogues*, *Georgics*, and *Aeneid* that it can be said that the poems constitute a political and ideological statement. Accordingly the setting of the *Eclogues*, *Georgics*, and the second half of the *Aeneid* is Italy; Arcadia, in fact, is mentioned specifically only a half dozen times (*Ecl.* 4.58, 4.59, 10.26; *G.* 3.392; *Aen.* 8.159, 10.429).³ The geographical common ground of Italy in all three works is consonant with its political elements.⁴ This association

¹ Snell (1953) 294.

² Sidney (1595) n.p.

³ Cf. Jenkyns (1989) 26–39, who plays down the presence of Arcadia in the *Eclogues*.

⁴ The issues raised in this discussion extend in the Vergilian text to geographical spaces outside Italy and the Roman world. In the *Georgics*, for example, there are references to the contamination or destruction of nature outside Italy such as the bones of the dead at Philippi (*G.* 1.489–97, esp. 490), the plague at Noricum (*G.* 3.478–566, esp. 474), and the butchery of animals in Scythia (*G.* 3.356–75).

between geography and politics is articulated in many forms during the Augustan age, especially its literature and architecture, but receives special emphasis in the Vergilian corpus or text. Just as Arcadia is never simply a landscape, Italy is never simply a geographical place. From the standpoint of its inhabitants and the narrator, the various features of the natural world are in a constant state of flux, ontogenesis, and decomposition. As symbolized by the shades overhanging the land that are *incertas* (e.g., *Ecl.* 5.5), the landscape never stabilizes; nor is it possible to demarcate absolutely its elements from those of the city. The physical environment is both Arcadia (e.g., *Ecl.* 4.58–9) and Italy (e.g., *Aen.* 7.776); there is the natural cycle of the seasons (e.g., *G.* 2.317–45); soldiers representing the values of the urban, politico-military superstructure replace traditional shepherds and farmers (e.g., *Ecl.* 1.70–1); and the implements of husbandry are recast into the weapons of that world (*G.* 1.508).

My investigation of Vergilian geopolitics concerns the ways in which Vergil successively incorporates the reality of contemporary Rome into the natural dialectics of the *Eclogues*, *Georgics* and *Aeneid*.⁵ Time and again political events are framed and to a varying extent exposed by the environment in which they take place; a frequent index of sympathy in Vergil is to be found in the narrator's presentation of or focalization upon aspects of the natural world.⁶ Expressed simply, Vergil uses nature to explore political issues throughout his *oeuvre*. Although Vergil's pastoral world has been viewed generally as a place of co-operation between man and the natural environment,⁷ the essential features of Vergil's commentary in exposing the vulnerability of the environment and its denizens to the ever-encroaching politico-military and urban worlds are not just generally sustained—despite moments of optimism and hope—but rather increase in magnitude and gravity as his narrative progresses.⁸ The *Aeneid* predicts both the past and the

⁵ In preparation for the writing of this chapter, all the references to nature in Vergil were recorded; I wish to acknowledge the assistance of Paul Roche in the compilation of these lists.

⁶ I am not concerned here with the ways that Vergil feminizes the landscape and associates nature and land with women, each of which are the object of male control and possession. For this idea see Keith (2000) 36–65 and Quarterone (2002) 147–58; cf. Oliensis (1997b) 304.

⁷ Halperin (1983) 42–9.

⁸ Cf. Anderson (1968) 1–17, who argues that pastoral innocence in the *Aeneid* becomes compromised in the world of political responsibility as represented in the figure of Aeneas.

future. Even though the epic looks ahead to the time of the *Eclogues* and *Georgics*, it actually represents the culmination of a number of naturalistic and political threads that are explored and developed in these earlier works.

Critics of Vergil have not often explored themes that cut across the *Eclogues*, *Georgics*, and *Aeneid* and cross-referenced the three poems extensively; when scholars have done so, they have usually divided their discussions into separate sections or chapters.⁹ These critical tendencies can be attributed to the generic disparities between the *Eclogues*, *Georgics*, and *Aeneid* and their Theocritean, Hesiodic, and Homeric associations respectively. Even so, it is surprising that relatively few thematic studies exist of a holistic and cross-referential nature given the close network of intertextual references between the poems and the vast bibliography that exists on the Vergilian corpus. Past scholarship on the aforementioned aspects of Vergil's writing has tended to treat individual poems or even discrete scenes within each of the three main works. The pastoral realm of the *Eclogues* has been read as exposing the political expediences of the triumviral "peace,"¹⁰ the Italy of the *Georgics* as lamenting the triumph of iron age man's unending struggle to dominate the environment over the power of song,¹¹ and the *Aeneid* as an expression of the poet's love of his *patria* and its indigenous inhabitants.¹² While these discussions focus on some areas or provoke aspects of the theme of geopolitics, there has been no systematic treatment or overview of this theme throughout Vergil's *oeuvre*. Given that the *Eclogues* (42–38 BCE), *Georgics* (37–29), and *Aeneid* (29–19) span Vergil's entire creative life, it is scarcely surprising that there is a strong sense in which these three works can be viewed narratologically as a supertext, that is, as a single work that can be read intertextually and holistically.¹³

⁹ One of the few scholars to discuss the *Eclogues*, *Georgics*, and *Aeneid* in the same study is A. J. Boyle. Although Boyle (1986) treats all three works in separate chapters (one each on the *Eclogues* and *Georgics* and two on the *Aeneid*), he extensively cross-references his discussions.

¹⁰ E.g., Putnam (1970) esp. 20–81; Boyle (1975b) 105–21; Boyle (1976) 16–31; Boyle (1986) 15–35; Martindale (1997b) 107–25.

¹¹ E.g., Perkell (1989) esp. 139–90.

¹² E.g., Moorton (1989) 105–30; Horsfall (1990) 305–15; Miles (1999) 231–50; cf. Cairns (1989) 109–28.

¹³ One of the few scholars to approach Vergil's text in this way is Theodorakopoulos (1977) 155–65, who refers to all three works as "the Book of Virgil."

Destruction of the Natural Environment

Locke sank into a swoon;
 The Garden died;
 God took the spinning jenny
 Out of his side.

W. B. Yeats, "Fragments: I"¹⁴

Yeats' fragment metaphorically suggests the phrase "green politics" used in Martindale's discussion of the *Eclogues*¹⁵ through the failure of human society to deal with the technological revolution and its destruction of the natural environment. Nature is a persistent motif throughout Vergil. The elements of the rural and natural worlds, established in the *Eclogues*, persist in the *Georgics* and are further developed in the *Aeneid*. My focus is on the natural world and its various settings, mainly the pastoral, agrarian, and sylvan environments, and the external political forces that impinge upon them. The disruption of the Italian countryside is shown to be neither insignificant nor inadvertent but the result of these forces. Leo Marx metaphorically remarks of the *Eclogues* that the "sound of the locomotive brings the noisy world into the midst of...slumberous peace."¹⁶ This world of the *Eclogues*, as suggested in its name ("Selections"), is fragmented, but there are moments of peace depicted in the disordered environment created by the confiscation of the shepherds' lands. Indeed Vergil never presents a univocal stance in his composite text: his narrative, like the world he depicts, oscillates and presents different and conflicting points of view. Nature is not only a victim of violence but also an agent of it—sometimes even against itself.¹⁷ Nature is also associated with the destructive propensity of mankind.¹⁸ Natural omens, portents, and imagery foretelling or

¹⁴ Gould (1989) 321.

¹⁵ Martindale (1997b) 107–25.

¹⁶ Marx (1965) 23.

¹⁷ Vergil does show the destructive side of the natural world. In the *Georgics* disease and plague destroys crops (1.370–72), whole flocks, and all animals (3.440–566). In the *Aeneid* the storm toward the beginning is depicted as a disruption of the natural order (1.50–156), while Aetna is portrayed as being complicit in the punishment of Enceladus (3.570–87).

¹⁸ Man is also frequently described in natural terms or associated with nature. In the *Aeneid* the hunt and storm are major motifs associated with Aeneas (4.129–72), but there are also dozens of other references to men who are described in natural terms or associated with nature, often destructively. Aeneas is likened to a destructive storm (*Aen.* 10.603–4, 12.451–5; cf. *Georgics* 1) and a raging torrent (*Aen.* 10.602–3), to a farmer

describing politico-military events also feature throughout the Vergilian supertext.¹⁹ Despite the ambiguities and tensions evident in the text, there is relatively little “slippage” in respect of Vergil’s presentation of man’s relationship with nature. The destructive and disorienting actions of external political forces upon the natural world and its inhabitants are abundantly manifest throughout.

As signaled by the opening five lines of *Eclogue* 1:

Tityre, tu patulae recubans sub tegmine fagi
siluestrem tenui musam meditaris auena:
nos patriae finis et dulcia linquimus arua;
nos patriam fugimus: tu, Tityre, lentus in umbra
formosam resonare doces Amaryllida siluas.²⁰
(Verg. *Ecl.* 1.1–5)

You, Tityrus, lying under the cover of a spreading
beech, play to the woodland muse on a narrow reed.
We are leaving the borders of our native land and sweet fields.
We are fleeing our home: you, Tityrus, relaxed in the shade,
Teach the woods to echo back “beautiful Amaryllis.”

smoking out a beehive (*Aen.* 12.587–92; cf. *G.* 4.230) in his assault on Laurentum, and to Mt. Athos in his impending clash with Turnus (*Aen.* 12.701–3). Aeneas is also compared to baleful Sirius (*Aen.* 10.272–5; cf. *Ecl.* 9.46–8; *G.* 1.365; *Aen.* 8.589–91) and as he waits to kill Mezentius is likened to a farmer waiting for the rain to stop (*Aen.* 10.803–10). Mezentius is compared to a cliff beset by the sea (10.693–6), an unfed lion stalking a roe-deer (721–9), a whirlwind, and Orion (762–7). The close association of nature with death is evident in Mezentius’ desire that he be buried in the earth (10.904) and the flower simile used in the description of Pallas being laid on his funeral bier (11.68–71). Aeneas, Turnus (12.521–6), and Pallas’ forces (10.405–11) are like scrub fires in battle. The death of Bitias at the hands of Turnus is described in terms of a landslide into the sea (9.708–16). Turnus is associated with pastoral Latium and its rustic divinities, namely his sister Juturna (12.138–60) and would-be grandfather-in-law Faunus (766–85), who protect him from Aeneas, but he is also a man of innate violence, which is a threat to pastoral peace; therefore it is not a surprise that Turnus wages war against pastoral Pallanteum. Turnus himself is compared to a wolf attacking sheep in the night (9.57–66) and is likened to a dislodged rock as he rushes to meet Aeneas (12.684–91). Even the onlookers who watch the duel between Turnus and Aeneas are equated with a herd of bulls waiting to see who will be their leader (12.715–19).

¹⁹ In the *Eclogues* the oaks, suggestive of “Romanness” in the *Aeneid* (*Aen.* 6.772; cf. 4.437–49, esp. 441), are struck by lightning, foretelling the disaster of the land confiscations (*Ecl.* 1.14–15). The sun blackens at the onset of civil war in the *Georgics* (1.404–14). In the *Aeneid* the geographical description of Carthage (1.157–68), which contains such verbs as *minantur* (162), *horrenti* (165), and *imminet* (165), suggests its future hostility to Rome, while the thundering image of arms in the sky portends imminent war between the Trojans and Italians (8.523–40). Sometimes the portents are admonitory: the earthquake at Delos (*Aen.* 3.90–93) and the plague at Crete warn off the Trojans (3.137–42).

²⁰ The text of Vergil used in this chapter is the recent text of G. P. Goold in Fairclough (1999a) and Fairclough (1999b). All translations are my own.

Here the speaker Meliboeus describes his fellow shepherd Tityrus reclining and happily playing his pipe under the shade of a beech tree (*Ecl.* 1.1, 4), a scene that recalls the Theocritean pastoral world at the beginning of the *Idylls* (1.1–28). The opening two lines of the first *Eclogue* feature the word *tegmine*, derived from *tegere*, which not only literally means “to cover” but also contains the suggestion of protection, including of persons.²¹ Indeed the tree with its canopy of foliage offers Tityrus protection, just as in *Eclogue* 7 the green arbutue shields Corydon and protects his flock from the midday sun (46–7). For Tityrus the pastoral ideal seems to be real: he is allowed to pasture his cattle as before and to breed his bulls (1.45). In this *locus amoenus* he is free from the hardships, worries, and dangers of the urban and pastoral environments depicted in *Georgics* 2 and 3 respectively (cf., e.g., 2.461–6, 495–512, esp. 501–10; 3.387–566 *passim*). The contrast with the agrarian realm of the *Georgics* is indeed marked, whose inhabitants must engage in Saturnian *labor* to produce the food that sustains them, even though this *labor* is by no means represented as being necessarily onerous (e.g., 2.37) or unproductive (e.g., 2.513–18).

But immediately after establishing an idyllic natural setting in the *Eclogues*, Vergil suggests in melancholic fashion the disorder surrounding it. The outside world—the world of Rome—is shown intruding upon the natural environment right from the start of Vergil’s text. Tityrus responds by praising a *deus* (“god,” *Ecl.* 1.6) in the colossus of Rome (cf. 24–5) to whom he owes his *otia* (“leisure,” 6) and fortunate circumstances. In response Meliboeus expresses not envy but astonishment at the upheaval and dislocation that lies around the fringes of Tityrus’ pastoral haven:

non equidem inuideo; miror magis: undique totis
usque adeo turbatur agris. en, ipse capellas
protinus aeger ago; hanc etiam uix, Tityre, duco.
hic inter densas corylos modo namque gemellos,
spem gregis, a! silice in nuda conixa reliquit.

(Verg. *Ecl.* 1.11–15)

I am not envious; rather, I am amazed. On all sides
throughout the countryside there is such chaos. Look! Sick, I drive
my goats onward. Yet this one, Tityrus, I can hardly drag.
For here now among the dense hazels she abandoned the twins,
hope of the flock—ah!—on the naked flint after hard travail.

²¹ Cf. *OLD* s.v. *tegere*.

The devastating effects of the urban world of Rome on the landscape, its inhabitants and animals, is palpable. Here at the beginning of the *Eclogues* Vergil suggests the inevitable suffering and loss as a result of history's vanquished.²² One of Meliboeus' goats, which comprise his only means of looking after himself, has been forced to abandon its new-born kids, highlighting the suffering of the animals in the natural world (cf. 1.74) and suggesting a disruption to its fertility and abundance. Although the landscape protects Tityrus and provides shelter and comfort, the victims of political disorder, among them Tityrus, who once felt secure in their idyllic environment, discover that it provides no real protection against the hostile forces and values of the urban world.

One form of man's violence against the Vergilian landscape takes the form of rural exploitation. This idea is apparent especially in the *Georgics* and *Aeneid*, where the exploitation of the resources of the natural environment on a global scale is emphasized. Vergil stresses that the agrarian world not only sustains the city but also is the primary source of its wealth. In *Georgics* 1 the whole world sends Rome her produce (56–9), while in *Georgics* 2 the wealth of nature is highlighted in the medicinal properties of plants (109–35); its herbaceous and arboreal crops (143–4, 173); its domestic animals, including the victims for Roman triumphs (144–50); the valuable metals it contains (165–6); the mothering of Italian people of different stock (167–74); and the richness of the varied Italian soils (177–225). In the *Georgics* man's distortion of nature is evident in Vergil's use of military language associated with agriculture: man curbs, rules, dominates, disciplines, and gives orders to his environment. It is apparent in numerous other acts such as man's conversion of woodland to farmland (2.207–11), the latter of which in the description of its violence at the hands of the *iratus arator* ("angry farmer") far exceeds the mere clearing of land for subsistence agriculture. The deforested land glistens under the ploughshare (211), but this destruction, dislocation, and transformation of the natural environment colors the achievement because it illustrates how the methods of rural exploitation become merged into the landscape and heightens the sense of what has been lost in these processes to the forces of civilization.

²² The poignant image of an ill Meliboeus urging his goats along anticipates the final scenes on Trajan's column where the Dacians drive their cattle forward for new and less hospitable territories, scenes constituting a parade of empire's sacrificial victims.

Man's distortion of the physical environment is also evident in his practice of arboriculture and viticulture. Arboriculture in the form of grafting (*G.* 2.30–82) and pruning (367–70) requires the husbandman to reshape and redirect forcefully the biological predisposition of the tree.²³ Viticulture is warfare that is waged against animated trees, as suggested in the uniform layout of vines being likened to the systematic assemblage of a cohort for a military engagement (2.278–87, esp. 279–83). The exploitation of nature to wage war is stressed in the *Georgics* in man's use of the willow as a source for javelins, the yew as a source of bows (2.447–8), and especially the use of horses in war (3.72–122, 179–208). In the *Aeneid* the potential for such exploitation is suggested in the Trojans' first sighting of Italy, which includes a temple and horses, potential omens of either peace or war (3.521–47, esp. 531–8). Elsewhere in the *Aeneid* the themes of the natural wealth of Italy, specifically the Tiber (7.29–36) and the wealth of its soil (1.530–1; cf. 7.178–9), recur. The exploitation and destruction of this physical environment is evident in the description of bees being compelled to give up the honey they have produced to the marauding shepherd (12.587–92), the numerous descriptions of violence toward and destruction of groves and trees (sacred or otherwise) at the hands of Aeneas and his men (e.g., 12.766–71),²⁴ and the use of nature for the stratagems and deceptions of war (e.g., 11.522–31). As in the *Eclogues* and *Georgics*, the destruction and transformation of the physical environment heightens the sense of general loss in the epic.

Vergil's landscapes are often violated rather than being merely exploited for their richness. The depiction of violence against the landscape, which was of significance to Rome given the tradition of its rustic foundations, furnishes a commentary in the *Aeneid* on the establishment of empire. In the Vergilian text landscape functions not merely as a traditional setting for epic but rather as an integral component of its message. The idyllic landscape of the *Eclogues* is transmuted into a site of violence in the *Georgics* and of destruction in the *Aeneid*; this violence appears to be especially opprobrious on account of the picturesque natural environment. The violation of the landscape therefore becomes

²³ Cf. Thomas (1988a) 19–21; Thomas (1988b) 271–2.

²⁴ Dyson (2001) 234 interprets trees and tree violation in the *Aeneid* as symbols of the moral complexity involved in human relationships and in man's relationship with nature.

a significant political and moral index of the chaos that afflicts the Italian countryside.²⁵

Man's violence against the landscape is frequently manifested in its actual destruction, often as the result of politico-military force and the shameless consumption of the civilized world. In the *Georgics* the fires of careless shepherds in Italy destroy their orchards (2.303–14), while men butcher animals in far-distant Scythia (3.356–75). But it is in the *Aeneid* that Vergil portrays the true nature of man's relationship with the environment. He achieves this through his descriptions of the Italian countryside and of the destructive effects that Aeneas and his Trojans have on their natural surroundings. Indeed man's systematic and improvident destruction of the landscape constitutes a form of warfare against nature. Early in book 1, where the idea is famously suggested, Aeneas kills seven stags in North Africa (1.184–93). While the motivation behind Aeneas' slaying of the stags appears to be reasonable and his action necessary on account of the hunger of the Trojans, it is notable that one of the first events to take place after the flight of the Trojans from their native land involves the depredation of nature. After reaching Thrace in book 3, the first landfall of the Trojans, Aeneas attempts successively to pull out three trees, with his first two efforts drawing blood from the roots and bark and his last attempt being more forceful and eliciting a pitiful groan (24–40). The Trojans come upon herds of cattle and flocks of goats roaming untended on the plains, which they rush upon and kill in the manner of hunters, not as religious devotees, even though their dual purpose is not just to feed themselves but also to sacrifice to Jove (3.219–23). The depictions of Dido as a wounded deer (4.69–73) and Turnus as a trapped stag (12.746–55) further show Aeneas' destructive force in a natural setting.

After the arrival of the Trojans at Cumae, *pars densa ferarum/tecta rapit siluas* ("some plunder the woods, the dense coverts of game," 6.7–8). The Trojans unsettle the peaceful surroundings by taking prey from the forest and chopping down its trees. The destructive impact of the hunting of Ascanius, an eager hunter of boars and lions (4.155–9), is

²⁵ Vergil ostensibly celebrates the achievements of Octavian/Augustus, especially in the *Georgics* (e.g., 1.24–42; 3.1–48) and *Aeneid* (e.g., 6.788–807; 8.678–81, 714–28), but my mapping out of Vergil's presentation of the natural world and the ways it is affected by those forces that are responsible for establishing the politico-military world of the empire inevitably suggests that his poems are not fundamentally those of imperial propaganda.

stressed in the well-known scene when he kills a stag from the royal herds ranging in the forest (7.479–502), which instigates the war in Italy (7.536–8.117). Unlike Aeneas' slaying of the seven stags in North Africa (1.180–97), which stems from hunger, there seems little motivation behind Ascanius' action other than the desire for the chief honor as a hunter (7.496–7). Nature is viewed as something that needs to be overcome and defeated, as suggested by Tarchon in his reference to the land as hostile (10.295–6). The disruption of the ancient topography is given specific iteration in the descriptions of the cutting down of the primeval forests to build the altar of Misenus' tomb (6.179–82) and the fleet of Aeneas (9.80–7), which thereby heightens the sense of the opposition between the condition of primitive, unspoiled nature and encroaching civilization. The Trojans' most telling assault upon nature occurs late in the *Aeneid* when they are shown to have cut down haphazardly a sacred wild olive tree in the process of removing all physical impediments from the field of battle so they could fight on open ground (12.766–71, esp. 770–1). This sacred tree evokes the wild olive of the *Georgics* suggestive in its primitive robustness of the pre-agrarian environment (cf. 2.179–83, esp. 181–3; 2.303–14, esp. 314) that runs counter to the values of the later politico-military and urban worlds. The indiscriminate felling of the sacred olive tree at the hands of the Trojan military machine toward the end of the *Aeneid* corresponds on the natural level to what Aeneas achieves on the politico-military level in the climax of the poem when he cuts down Turnus (950–2).

In the *Aeneid* Vergil reveals that one of the consequences of Aeneas' successful mission is the despoliation of the natural environment of Italy. The narrative stresses the rural purity of pre-Trojan Italy in the description of Latinus' pedigree (7.45–9), the identification of the Italians with nature through Remulus' definition of the native Italian lifestyle (9.598–620), and the emphasis upon the close association between Turnus and rural Latium (12.138–60, 766–85). The natural world of pre-Trojan Italy therefore has a history that appears to contrast markedly with the Trojan violence toward and destruction of the Italian pastoral and sylvan environments. Since the Trojans' arrival in Italy is directly related to the destruction of the landscape, the world that Aeneas helps to bring into existence therefore is far removed from the one that he encounters. Yet Vergil appears to modify and obfuscate this rural depiction of Italy by showing the Italians as being no less capable of violence toward and destruction of the physical environment than the Trojans in their waging of war; as Drances observes, *ingentis et desolauimus*

agros (“we have laid waste to vast lands,” 11.367). The destruction of nature is not just an isolated occurrence or an artistic convention. Its widespread nature is emphasized when both the Trojan and Italian forces trample all over the land in their bloody confrontations. Thus Vergil summarizes the disastrous effects of the Roman arrival and victory in Italy upon the natural surroundings.

Intrusion of the Politico-military and Urban Worlds

Oh, Meliboeus, I have half a mind
To take a writing hand in politics.
Before now poetry has taken notice
Of war, and what are wars but politics
Transformed from chronic to acute and bloody?

I may be wrong, but, Tityrus, to me
The times seem revolutionary bad.

The question is whether they've reached a depth
Of desperation that would warrant poetry's
Leaving Love's alternations, joy and grief,
The weather's alternations, summer and winter,
Our age-long theme, for the uncertainty
Of judging who is a contemporary liar...

(Robert Frost, “Build Soil: A Political Pastoral”)²⁶

This extract from Frost's poem, which clearly alludes to *Eclogue* 1, pointedly stresses the intrusion of political society into the pastoral realm and its poetic expression. Each of Vergil's major works engages with contemporary reality in a serious and sustained way rather than constructs a poetic world that excludes or trivializes politics. The poet draws attention to the reach of the urban world into the pastoral and natural environments as well as the consequent despoliation of the physical landscape and suffering of its denizens. Indeed the historical reality of Rome lies not just on the periphery of the natural world but firmly in its midst. In the *Eclogues* Meliboeus' experience becomes merged into the *Realpolitik* of Rome. In contrast to the situation of Tityrus, an embodiment of the pastoral ideal, in the opening two lines of the *Eclogues*, the subsequent pair of lines abruptly counterbalance this idyllic image when the shepherd Meliboeus describes own his loss as

²⁶ Lathem (2002) 145–6.

malum (“a disaster,” “an evil,” 1.16) and casts himself in the role of the exiled and dispossessed. The reference to Rome at the commencement of Vergil’s supertext is significant. Tityrus informs Meliboeus of his own felicitous circumstances in having his land restored after traveling to Rome (6–10, 19–25, 27–35, 40–45). Just as the respective fortunes of Tityrus and Meliboeus, whose land has been confiscated and handed over to a soldier (*E.* 1.70–1), exemplify the diametrical consequences of Roman power, Tityrus’ emblematic comparison of Rome to the cypress tree (24–5) suggests both the positive and negative aspects of Rome’s reach into the Italian countryside even for its own citizens.²⁷ Meliboeus asks the identity of the *deus* who is responsible for Tityrus’ good fortune (18), whereupon Tityrus describes him as *illum iuuenem* (“that youth,” *Ecl.* 1.42) in Rome (cf. 19) who granted his petition for the return of his land (44). As is well known, many critics from the time of Servius have considered this *deus* to be Octavian, who presided over the land evictions of 41 BCE in the aftermath of the triumviral settlement imposed on Italy after the battle of Philippi (cf. 1.70–1; 9.1–3).²⁸ But the real significance of the references to Rome and Meliboeus is that they situate the rural setting firmly in the context of contemporary politics by stressing the external influence of a powerful politico-military figure upon the landscape and its inhabitants, including the authorial voice. Such a figure can arbitrarily restore as well as expropriate and dispense land. Right from the start of the *Eclogues* Vergil incorporates elements into the natural environment that transcend the boundaries of the imaginary world by reflecting the politico-military realities of the city. The landscape of the *Eclogues* is not merely fictional but reflects the long period of civil unrest in the first century BCE that brought widespread destruction upon the Italian countryside. The disintegration of the *locus amoenus* in the *Eclogues* is afforded political import not just by its manifest association to the intrusion of the urban superstructure but especially by the personal tragedies of its inhabitants. In Vergil’s first *oeuvre* the landscape objectifies political reality as well as the psy-

²⁷ Although the cypress tree can read mainly as an image of Rome’s preeminence above other cities, some commentators have noted the association of the cypress tree with death and Roman power, for example, Boyle (1975b) 107, 118 n. 11; esp. Connors (1992) 1–17; *contra* Du Quesnay (1981) 37.

²⁸ It has not been my purpose to discuss specifically the role of Octavian in Vergil’s presentation of geopolitics in the Vergilian corpus. For a recent discussion see Nappa (2005), who examines the *Georgics*.

chological condition of its inhabitants.²⁹ In other words, the disorder of the Roman world is already implanted upon the landscape of the *Eclogues* or reflected in its physical state.

The historical fact of physical violence, geographical displacement, and human misery is embodied in the figure of Meliboeus. For Meliboeus in *Eclogue* 1 the seemingly unjust confiscation of his land results in exile, rootlessness, alienation, and privation:

at nos hinc alii sitientis ibimus Afros,
 pars Scythiam et rapidum cretae ueniemus Oaxen
 et penitus toto diuisos orbe Britannos.
 en unquam patrios longo post tempore finis,
 pauperis et tuguri congestum caespitem culmen
 post aliquot, mea regna uidens, mirabor aristas?
 impius haec tam culta noualia miles habebit,
 barbarus has segetes? en quo discordia cuius
 produxit miseros: his nos consequimur agros.
 insere nunc, Meliboe, pios, pone ordine uitis.
 ite meae, felix quondam pecus, ite capellae.

(Verg. *Ecl.* 1.64–74)

But we must go from here: some to the thirsting Africans,
 some to arrive at Scythia, the chalk-churning Oaxes,
 and the Britons, completely cut off from the whole world.
 Ah, after long years shall I ever see the borders of my
 homeland, the turf-clad roof of my simple hut? Shall I after
 long years wonder as I gaze upon on my kingdom, my corn?
 Will a godless soldier own these well-farmed plowlands,
 A foreigner these crops? See where discord has brought our
 misfortunate citizens? For these men we have sown our fields!
 Graft now, Meliboeus, your pear trees; set your vines in rows.
 Onward, my little goats; onward, once happy flock.

The consequences of the intrusion of a violent alien world into the pastoral environment could not be more apparent. Meliboeus ponders whether he will ever see his rural homeland again. While he is exiled to a distant land within or beyond the confines of the Roman empire, a soldier and foreigner will now cultivate his fields and harvest his crops. In a prevenient allusion to the corresponding penultimate *Eclogue* (cf. *insere...piros*, 9.50), which elaborates upon the consequences of the shepherds' trials, Meliboeus observes ironically that *now*—from the

²⁹ Cf. Boyle (1986) 15, who asserts that the *Eclogues* investigate “the psychological chaos and spiritual impoverishment which Virgil sees as the city’s legacy and the corollary of technological growth.”

reader's perspective, even in the first *Eclogue*—he can no longer graft his pears (*insere nunc, Meliboeus, pios*, 1.73) and plant his vines in rows. As exemplified in the soldier, the politico-military world surrounding Meliboeus' (and others') pastoral world encroaches upon that environment in much the same way that the military context infringes upon the pastoral genre (e.g., *Ecl.* 10.44–9). The cause of the soldier's intrusion upon the agrarian landscape of Italy is civil strife (1.71–2; cf. 11–12). This *impius miles* ("godless soldier," 70) and *barbarus* ("foreigner," 71) is representative of the capricious power of an alien world that transmutes the pastoral environment into a politico-military possession. In the *Georgics* hardy Libyan shepherds are compared to *acer Romanus in armis* ("the harsh Roman in arms," 3.343–8), a clear allusion to this "foreigner" who dispossesses the shepherds of their lands.

The Vergilian supertext progressively displays the signs of the irruption of soldiers and the urban realm into the landscape. The politico-military and urban worlds in the form of proscriptions and the confiscation of land constitute the main intrusions upon the natural environment.³⁰ The divide between city and country in the *Eclogues* manifests in the settlement of Octavian's and Antony's veterans on to expropriated land after the civil wars. This divide is further apparent in the *Eclogues* when Corydon remarks, *Pallas, quas condidit arces, / ipsa colat: nobis placeant ante omnia silvae* ("let Pallas herself live in the cities she has built; let my main pleasure be the woods" (2.61–2), and in the *Georgics* when the poet observes that farmers are fortunate because they are far from battle (2.458–60). The opposition between rural and urban life and values is evident in the *Georgics*, for example, in the juxtaposed descriptions of life in the countryside (2.458–60, 467–94, 513–31) and at Rome (2.459, 461–6, 495–512), which significantly are placed at the mid-point of the Vergilian corpus, and in the contrast between Octavian/warfare (4.559–62) and Vergil/countryside (4.563–6) in the *sphragis*. Vergil also incorporates the reality of contemporary Rome and of Octavian into the *Georgics* in his *ekphrasis* of the proposed temple at Mantua (3.13–39), whose qualities and values resemble those just objugated in his descriptions of urban life (2.459, 461–6, 495–512).

Not only is the opposition between the countryside and city apparent in the *Aeneid* but also the stark conversion of the rural environment into

³⁰ Other disruptions upon the pastoral world are love (*Ecl.* 2.69; *G.* 3.216) and death (*Ecl.* 5.20–44).

an urban setting. When Evander gives Aeneas a tour of the topography of the future site of Rome, for example, instead of the golden Capitol, Roman Forum, and the exclusive neighborhood of Carinae symbolic of imperial grandeur and excess, there are the woodland thickets and the humble, thatched home of Evander emblematic of pre-Roman rural Italy and early Rome (8.337–61, esp. 347–8, 359–61).³¹ The representation of the physical environment being subject to the violence of the Roman politico-military world is stressed in the *ekphrasis* of the shield of Aeneas (8.671–731), especially in the descriptions of the brambles in the woods dripping with Mettus' blood (644–5) and of Actium (675–713). In the latter depiction, Actium is ablaze with war (675–7) and its surrounding seas (cf. 675), normally suitable for dolphins (671–4), become red with carnage (695, 703, 709) as a result of the clash between Octavian's and Antony's fleets (689–92). Through this onslaught of urban and politico-military values Vergil thus challenges any preconceived notion on the part of the reader of the pastoral and natural realms as places of innocence and tranquility. His Italian landscapes are manifestations of the political disorder and geographical dislocation caused by military and civil conflict to the rural environment of contemporary Italy.

Civil discord and the consequences of war affect guardians of the landscape other than Meliboeus not only in the *Eclogues*, namely Moeris and Lycidas, who are also dispossessed of their farm, suffer exile, and experience a similar sense of alienation and suffering (*Ecl.* 9.2–6), but also elsewhere in the Vergilian supertext. The self-conscious closing line of *Georgics* 4 (*Tityre, te patulae cecini sub tegmine fagi*, “Tityrus, I sang of you under the cover of the spreading beech,” 4.566) refers to the opening lines of the *Eclogues*, which thereby makes clear the continuing relevance of the figure of Octavian that looms anonymously behind the scene of *Eclogue* 1, including the resentment over the land confiscations. The historical circumstances of the *Eclogues* and *Georgics* reveal the reason for the progressive politicization of their rural environments. When *Eclogue* 1 was written, there was yet another civil war to come; by the time of the fourth *Georgic*, that war had passed, leaving in its wake a chaos that was political, social, and moral. Whereas Octavian is possibly alluded

³¹ It is not my intention here to discuss the relationship between land and the imperial monuments in Vergil's text. The buildings referred to, for example, in the *Aeneid* are many, including the temple of Apollo at Actium (3.274, 8.704), the temple of Apollo at Cumae (6.18–31), the mausoleum of Augustus (6.874), and the Lupercal (8.343).

to indirectly in the *Eclogues* (1.6–10, 42–5), he is addressed specifically by the name of Caesar in the *Georgics* (1.24) and in his enhanced position of Augustus in the *Aeneid* (6.792; 8.678), which draws attention to his increasing power.

At the end of *Georgics* 1, where Vergil expresses apprehension over civil and foreign conflicts (463–514), he alludes to Octavian's desire for triumphs (503–4). Civil war takes place in a universe with an inverted sense of right and wrong (1.505). The farmers at Philippi hereafter will plough up not only javelins and helmets but also the bones of their fellow citizens (*G.* 1.489–97). They will not be harvesting the crops of a Meliboeus or of the soldier who had forced him off his land (cf. *Ecl.* 1.70–2), or apparently even their own crops (cf. *G.* 1.493–7), but rather the corpses of the dead that had been strewn across the field in internecine battles (497; cf. 490–2). As Vergil specifically observes, war destroys respect for the plough: the lands lie in waste and pruning hooks are forged into straight blades (*G.* 1.506–8). The *Georgics* is actually more of a poem about the frenzied proclivity for battle and the intrusion of politico-militaristic values into the agrarian landscape than it is an example of the delicate pastoral aesthetic. This is evident in the irruption of war (1.463–514; 4.67–87, cf. *Quirites*, “Roman citizens,” 201); the condemnation of the urban, politico-military superstructure and its ideology (2.458–65, 495–512); and the poet's avowed interest in pursuing military themes in the near future (3.46–8). Until now Vergil had steered clear of writing martial verse generally, but from the close of *Georgics* 1 he gives increasing attention to warfare and its violence. In the *Georgics* there is praise of Octavian (1.24–42; 3.1–48), but his identification with warfare in contrast to that of Vergil with the countryside in the *sphragis* of the *Georgics* (4.559–66) foreshadows the political undercurrents of the *Aeneid*. In his epic Vergil uses prophecy (6.792) and *ekphrasis* (8.678) to incorporate the world of Augustus.

In fact, contemporary events figure even more explicitly in the *Aeneid* than in the *Eclogues* and *Georgics*. In the *Aeneid* Vergil constantly reminds us of the natural world and its relationship with politics.³² As Snell points out, “politics is grounded in reality, and that it must of necessity resort to force in order to realize its objectives.”³³ Vergil stresses

³² The idea for this chapter was conceived out of my discussion many years ago with some colleagues who fundamentally disagreed with this idea.

³³ Snell (1953) 293.

the peacefulness of Latium and of Latinus' reign prior to the arrival of the Trojans (*Aen.* 7.45–9) and the irenic nature of its tribes, whose troops are described as being long unaccustomed to war (7.693–4). The intrusion of the politico-military world of the Trojans into the life of the Italian countryside and its inhabitants precipitates violence, war, and death on an unprecedented scale; as Vergil remarks, *certatur limine in ipso/Ausoniae* ("on Ausonia's threshold itself is the struggle," 10.355–6). In the second half of the *Aeneid* alone, the rural population and armed farmers of Italy rush to avenge Ascanius' slaying of Silvia's pet stag (*Aen.* 7.505–10, 519–21); the land is sown with arms (7.551); the farmers forge weapons (7.625–40, esp. 635–6); the vintners take up arms (7.725–30); the farmers and country folk leave their lands to defend Italy (8.8; 9.11); Aeneas rages against the rural dwellers (10.310); the lands are made desolate (11.367); bodies and bones litter the fields (*Aen.* 11.100–5; 12.36; cf. 11.372–3), as in the *Georgics* (1.497), and they stain them and the rivers with their blood (*Aen.* 10.489; 12.35–6); innumerable pyres from funerals dot the landscape and blacken the sky with smoke (11.184–212, esp. 186–7, 208–9); and the physical environment re-echoes the sound of battle (12.722, 746–57, 929).

The Shadowed Countryside

The arboreal shade that hangs over the fragile landscape in the opening lines of the *Eclogues* is extended to other uses throughout the Vergilian text. The intrusion of urban civilization and politics into the pastoral realm and its violation of the natural landscape are omnipresent. The eviction and exile of Meliboeus from his land mirrors the dispossessed and disaffected elsewhere in the Vergilian corpus. The catastrophic effect of urban man and his values upon nature and its indigenous inhabitants, man and animal, is stressed. *Eclogue* 1 is programmatic of the entire text of Vergil, not just the *Eclogues*, on various levels.

At the end of the first *Eclogue* Tityrus offers Meliboeus a brief respite from his dilemma:

hic tamen hanc mecum poteris requiescere noctem
fronde super uiridi: sunt nobis mitia poma,
castaneae molles et pressi copia lactis;
et iam summa procul uillarum culmina fumant
maioresque cadunt altis de montibus umbrae.

(Verg. *Ecl.* 1.79–83)

Yet here this night you could have rested with me
 upon the green leafage. I have ripe apples,
 mealy chestnuts and a supply of pressed cheeses.
 Already the rooftops of the distant farms are sending up
 their smoke and longer shadows are falling from the mountain tops.

No solution for Meliboeus' plight is offered by Tityrus or anyone else. The wealth generated from Tityrus' land lies in stark contrast to Meliboeus' poverty and stricken flock. Meliboeus' sole comfort lies in the one night of accommodation and sustenance he is granted before he must resume his exilic wanderings. But the vulnerability of Tityrus' own position is suggested by the chaos, encroaching marsh, and twilight shadows that envelop his land. By the end of the first *Eclogue* the protective shade of the beech tree has been transmuted into the menacing shadows that enshroud the landscape. The arrival of Meliboeus on Tityrus' land, the distant presence of the *deus* who has control over the countryside, the chaos and militaristic imagery, the foreigners who displace the shepherds from their lands—all not merely signal the encroachment of the city and its values upon the countryside but also the destruction of the pastoral way of life.

At a number of critical junctures the Vergilian supertext looks back meaningfully to the first lines of the first *Eclogue*. The shadows that begin the first *Eclogue* (4) appear at the end of the same *Eclogue* (1.83) and *Eclogue* 10 (75–7) as evening approaches. The shadows that protect Tityrus at the start of the *Eclogues* become oppressive by the end, detrimental alike to the inhabitants and crops of the pastoral world:

surgamus: solet esse grauis cantantibus umbra,
 iuniperi grauis umbra; nocent et frugibus umbrae.
 ite domum saturae, uenit Hesperus, ite capellae.
 (Verg. *Ecl.* 10.75–7)

Let us arise: shade is often oppressive to singers;
 oppressive is the juniper's shade. Shadows too harm crops.
 Go home, little goats well fed—the evening star comes—homeward.

The intrusion of the soldier and the world of the city upon the pastoral environment is enhanced by the fluidity of the boundaries around Tityrus' farm. Toward the end of the programmatic first *Eclogue* the exiled Meliboeus urges his goats onward: *ite...ite capellae* (1.74). Now Tityrus uses these same words in exactly the same position of the hexametric line at the end of the final *Eclogue*. Like Meliboeus at the close of *Eclogue* 1, Tityrus seems anxious, even fearful. The ambiguous shadows, suggestive of the reach of imperial Rome and its civilization,

have become menacing in their portent. Rome, which represents politico-military power and authority, causes discord, suffering, and chaos in the natural world it controls and exploits.

The darkness that concludes *Eclogue* 1 overshadows the entire Vergilian supertext and assumes prominence at significant points, especially at the beginning and end of books. The shadows that fall longer over the landscape at the end of *Eclogues* 1 (*maiores cadunt... umbrae*, 83) do not merely grow at the end of *Eclogues* 2 but double in number (*crescentis... duplicate umbras*, 67). The chaos afflicting the physical landscape in these eclogues and *Eclogue* 3 is represented in the shadows that cast their pall over the landscape; the idealism of *Eclogues* 4–6 is subtly undercut at the end of the sixth *Eclogue*, the mid-point of the collection, in the approach of evening (*Vesper*, 85–6); the beginning of *Eclogue* 7, where Daphnis invites Meliboeus to leave his animals, listen to his friends' music and to rest *sub umbra* ("in the shade," 7.10), not only alludes to the beginning of *Eclogue* 1, where Tityrus sings beneath the shade of the beech tree, but also suggests the lethal implications of the shadows through an internal intertextual reference to the last words of the *Aeneid* (*sub umbras*, 12.952); and the final two poems of *Eclogues* 7–10, which revert to the chaos of the first three books, conclude with the suggestion of night (*nox*, 9.63) and evening (*Hesperus*, "evening star," 10.77).

This shifting pattern of light and darkness, optimism and pessimism, mirrors the movement of the Vergilian text as a whole, including the *Georgics* and *Aeneid*. When Orpheus descends to the underworld to bring back Eurydice at the end of the *Georgics*, for instance, the *umbrae* of the underworld are *tenues* ("insubstantial," 4.472) and *simulacra luce carentum* ("phantoms of those lacking light," 472).³⁴ After Orpheus turns back too early to look at Eurydice before reaching the upper world, her form begins to dissolve and is *ingenti circumdata nocte* ("enclosed by night's vast expanse," 497); that is, Eurydice is merged into the darkness of the underworld and becomes indistinguishable from it. As this occurs, Orpheus is described as *prensantem nequiquam umbras* ("clutching in vain at the shadows," 501), in other words, not just Eurydice's shade but also the darkness of the underworld. Subsequently Orpheus is shown grieving in the manner of a nightingale lamenting all night (*noctem*, 514) the loss of her unfledged young at the hands of a heartless ploughman

³⁴ In my discussion of Orpheus and *umbra* generally, I am indebted to the insightful comments of Theodorakopoulos (1977) 163–4.

who has removed them from her nest (511–15). This scene at the end of *Georgic* 4 also recalls the shades that cover the landscape at the end of *Eclogues* 1, 2, 6, 9, and 10 and at the beginning of *Eclogue* 7 in their association with nature and song. So *umbra* becomes associated with the pastoral realm and song as well as darkness and death. The Vergilian context reveals *umbra* ambiguously as a setting that is suitable for song but also as a potentially lethal place. But the image of the shade as *locus amoenus* alluded to in the *sphragis* of *Georgics* 4 (559–66), which was jettisoned at the end of the *Eclogues* (10.75–7), is revealed as an ideal fixed firmly in the past (cf. *G.* 4.563–6). The inhabitants of the pastoral world realize that the area under the cover of the trees and the darkness of the night is a variable, deceptive, even sinister place.

Beyond the boundaries of the *Eclogues* and *Georgics* there is not just more of the same but a greater degree of what is foreshadowed in these works, with two-thirds of the references to *umbra* in the Vergilian corpus appearing in the *Aeneid*.³⁵ Using the images of shade, shadows, and darkness, the Vergilian supertext narrates a tale that is consistent with the themes of the destruction of the natural environment and the intrusion of the politico-military and urban worlds. The sinister implications of the word *umbra* are formulated in the *Eclogues* and *Georgics* and further developed in the *Aeneid* itself. As in the *Georgics*, the connotations of *umbra* in the *Aeneid* are seen to involve both darkness and the ghosts of the deceased. Early in the epic *umbra* is used mainly to suggest darkness, as in the gloomy shade of the grove ominously overhanging the harbor (*horrenti atrum nemus imminet umbra*, *Aen.* 1.165) that greets the Trojans on their arrival at Carthage (159–73) or in the shade of the night (*umbra*, 2.51; cf. *silentia lunae*, 255) that envelops the world and is complicit in the destruction of Troy (2.250–6). But a little further on in *Aeneid* 2 Vergil uses *umbra* to suggest the darkness of Troy at night

³⁵ *Vmbra* (or its variants) is mentioned seventy-one times in the *Aeneid* (1.165, 311, 441, 547, 607, 693; 2.251, 360, 420, 514, 621, 693, 732, 768, 772; 3.230, 508, 589, 638; 4.7, 25, 26, 184, 351, 386, 571, 660; 5.81, 734, 839; 6.139, 257, 264, 268, 271, 289, 294, 340, 390, 401, 404, 452, 461, 490, 510, 578, 619, 866, 894; 7.619, 770; 8.276; 9.314, 373, 411; 10.190, 519, 541, 593, 636; 11.81, 210, 611, 831; 12.53, 207, 669, 859, 864, 881, 952). Nineteen of these references occur (naturally enough) in book 6, which represents over one-quarter of all such references in the epic. *Vmbra* (or its variants) is mentioned on fifteen occasions in the *Eclogues* (1.4, 83; 2.3, 8, 67; 5.5, 40, 70; 7.10, 46, 58; 8.14; 9.20; 10.75, 76) and twenty-three times in the *Georgics* (1.21, 157, 191, 209, 342, 366; 2.19, 58, 297, 410, 435, 489; 3.145, 334, 357, 418, 464, 520; 4.146, 402, 472, 501, 411).

(*umbra*, 2.768) and the ghost of the deceased Creusa (*umbra*, 772; cf. *imago*, 773) in the same passage (768–73). In *Aeneid* 6 Vergil includes these two possible meanings of *umbra*: the denotation of the darkness of the underworld (*per umbram*, 6.268; *multa... in umbra*, 340) and reference to human ghosts (*frustra ferro diuerberet umbras*, 6.294). Close to the critical mid-point of the epic, Vergil links these two images together when Aeneas has trouble discerning the ghost of Dido in the forest of the mourning fields because of the darkness and other shades around her (*per umbras/obscuram*, 452–3).

The Vergilian supertext ends with *umbra*. In the final line of the *Aeneid*, the soul of Turnus is described as fleeing resentfully with a groan *sub umbras* (12.952) just after Aeneas plunges his sword full into his breast (950–1). On one level the words *sub umbras*, which constitute the decisive moment of Vergil's composite text, allude to the shades of the dead, but on another level they also refer to the shadows, or darkness, of the underworld. These words connect with *umbra* in the last part of *Eclogue* 1, the programmatic section of the Vergilian corpus, which also finishes in darkness. The end of the first *Eclogue* literally foreshadows the end of the *Aeneid*. *Sub umbras* (*Aen.* 12.952) is an epic rewriting both of the shade of the beech tree that covers Tityrus (*Ecl.* 1.1, 4) and the twilight shadows that envelop the landscape at the end or beginning of no fewer than six of the *Eclogues*. While *sub umbras* suggests the failure of the pastoral ideal through its allusion to the shadows that are oppressive to singers and inhabitants of the pastoral realm (cf. *Ecl.* 1.75–6), the phrase also suggests in political terms the unrealizability of the ideology of empire. The climax of the Vergilian supertext does not represent the fulfillment of the golden age predicted (or golden-age style mentioned) in the *Eclogues* (e.g., 4.18–30, 37–47; 5.60–63) and *Georgics* (e.g., 1.125–8; 2.336–45, 458–74, 513–40) but rather serves as an epic commentary on Meliboeus' fate in the *Eclogues* and a narrative rejoinder to the vision of Rome's mission in the *Aeneid* (1.257–96, esp. 278–9; 7.756–886, esp. 851–3).³⁶ The fates of Meliboeus and Turnus demonstrate that there is no compromise between the rights of the individual and the exigencies of empire. The humiliation and demise of Turnus recall the fate of Meliboeus, who is about to depart his land to a future of suffering and

³⁶ On the end of the *Aeneid* and its ideological consequences, see Dominik (1996a) 129–138, esp. 133–4.

alienation. In both cases a foreigner has dispossessed a native inhabitant of his land in Italy and consigned his victim to a tragic fate. Whereas the fate of the victim in the opening scene of Vergil's supertext is exile, in the concluding scene it is death.

Epilogue

The natural world of Vergil thus provides an illuminating background for the depiction of contemporary geopolitics. The *Eclogues*, *Georgics*, and *Aeneid* reveal a conflict to varying degrees between the values of the natural world and those of the politico-military, urban world. An abiding dynamic within all three poems is the tension that arises from the agonistic attempts of various competing groups to claim for themselves definitively the landscape of Italy and the environment's own modes of validating, complicating, and refuting such claims. Vergil's composite text not only offers varied levels of resistance to the forces of history and the political teleology of the individual poems but also reacts sympathetically to the (often unwitting) casualties of the Augustan construction of imperial Rome's past. A supertextual reading of Vergil that allows him a consistent presentation of the natural world reveals the extent to which these forces of history and the poet's sympathetic response triumph narratologically against the backdrop of the physical environment.

CHAPTER SIX

HORACE'S POLITICAL JOURNEY

Robin Bond

They who in folly or mere greed
Enslaved religion, markets, laws,
Borrow our language now and bid
Us to speak up in freedom's cause.
It is the logic of our times,
No subject for immortal verse—
That we who lived by honest dreams
Defend the bad against the worse.¹

C. Day-Lewis, "Where Are the War Poets?"

Day-Lewis speaks of the poet, devoted to "honest dreams," being required to write in "freedom's cause" and "defend the bad against the worse." He was not as enthusiastic as some to share in post war optimism. Was Horace totally happy after Philippi and Actium with the record of the victors in the civil war? Was Horace as committed a devotee of the new regime as it was once fashionable to believe?² There are various stages to Horace's political trajectory: republican and survivor, critic, Augustan eulogist and would be "apolitical" Epicurean recluse.

Republican

Certain *Epodes* deal with events surrounding Actium. *Epode* 1 is set before the campaign that culminated in the battle. Maecenas prepares to accompany Octavian on his expedition to the east. As Watson says, the poem is about friendship at a time of crisis.³ In the crucible of war

¹ Day-Lewis (1992) 335.

² Two typical examples informed by the *Zeitgeist* of their times: Scullard (1959) 244: "Vergil and Horace started indeed as poets of the revolutionary triumviral period but they became the evangelists of the settlement. That their co-operation with Augustus was advantageous does not mean that it was insincere"; Syme (1939) 464–5: "If Livy, Horace and Vergil had private and material reasons for gratitude to Augustus that fact may have reinforced, but it did not pervert, the sentiments natural to members of the pacific and *non-political* order in society" (*italics mine*).

³ Watson (2003) 51–7.

Horace is keen that his friendship for Maecenas is seen as genuine, that he exemplifies all that is best about Roman *amicitia* (“friendship”) and *fides* (“loyalty”). In *Epodes* 7 and 16 Horace rages against the folly of civil wars, although 16, written not long after Philippi but placed late in the collection, is an example of the poet putting an earlier piece into the service of a later agenda, anticipating the golden age of Augustus by reference to a need once felt to escape upon a voyage to the west. The triumph at Actium ensures that the projected voyage of *Epode* 16 is not necessary, however, except in a figurative sense, a voyage into a golden future under the protection of the *custos* (“guardian”), Octavian. *Epode* 7 shows Horace enraged that Rome was about to inflict harm on herself to gratify foreign enemies. Romans are worse than beasts. The race is cursed because of a former crime, the stain of which can only be cleansed by the spilling of Roman blood. Horace, *qua uates* (“prophet”; cf. *Epod.* 16.66), sets himself up as conscience and critic of society, as watchdog, according to his own statement at *Epode* 6, attacking Cassius Severus,

nam qualis aut Molossus aut fuluos Lacon,
 amica uis pastoribus,
 agam per altas aure sublata niuis,
 quaecumque praecedet fera;
(Hor. *Epod.* 6.5–8)

Like some Molossian hound or yellow Spartan breed,
 the shepherd's friend,
 ears pricked I'll hunt my prey down through snow drifts deep,
 whatever beast goes on ahead;

In the allegory of this poem the shepherds are Octavian and his supporters, Maecenas and Agrippa. There is debate concerning the dating of *Epode* 7. Suggested dates vary from 41 to 36 BCE, with Watson favoring the end of 39 or early 38. The poem antedates Actium and was included in the collection published after that watershed event. Kraggerud,⁴ argues for a date of 32 because, to quote Watson's summary of his argument:

Horace, for the best part of a decade by then a supporter of Octavian, could not possibly in 30 BC have included in the *Epodes* such a bleakly despairing message for the future of Rome; one which moreover contained

⁴ Kraggerud (1984).

implied criticism of Octavian in the shape of *scelesti ciues* unsheathing their swords for a renewal of the contest against Sextus Pompeius, Octavian's main antagonist of these years.⁵

Watson considers Kraggerud's arguments circular and provides his own explanation why Horace chose to include such a piece, written before Actium, in a collection of poems published after the event, when, supposedly, Horace was looking to the Octavianic future with optimism:

All in all, it appears more persuasive to assume that *Epode* 7 was written in 39–37 bc and was retained in the published collection as a salutary reminder of the fate from which Octavian had saved the Roman state, and as a tacit admission that the poet's stark pessimism of those years needed qualification in the light of subsequent events.⁶

Explanations of the causes of the war based on mythic guilt were more palatable to Horace's masters than ones based on competition for power between factions motivated by naked ambition. All the combatants in the wars were guilty, though some parties may be more guilty or, to use Day-Lewis' term "worse" than others, who are nevertheless "bad." Some phrases such as *scelesti ruitis* ("you sinners rush headlong," 7.1) and *furorae caecus* ("blind fury," 7.13) are ambivalent, suggesting both criminality and a kind of Homeric infatuation, in which case Octavian might be thought of as being tarred with the same fratricidal brush as his opponents, although to Horace the domination of Octavian's faction might well have been preferable to that of Antony and his paramour. This does not mean that Horace's relief at the outbreak of peace was not genuine, nor that his praises of Augustus' regime are the cynical work of a well rewarded hack. He was, though, too well aware of the political realities of the struggles in which he had played a part to be able with clear conscience to provide in the first instance an uncritical view of Octavian's behaviors and ambitions in the civil wars.

In *Epode* 9, the rage of *Epode* 7 is replaced by a desire to celebrate Octavian's victory over a man who had sold out (*emancipatus*, 12) to Cleopatra. Neither Antony nor Cleopatra are mentioned explicitly, although the *spadonibus... rugosis* ("shriveled eunuchs," 13–14) and the *turpe... conopium* ("pavilion of love," 15–16) among the *signa... militaria* ("military standards," 15) indicate identity. They are still alive. Horace

⁵ Watson (2003) 269.

⁶ Watson (2003) 270.

has reconstructed his case to demonstrate that Octavian is a better Roman than Antony who, with Cleopatra, makes up a corrupt and immoral pairing. The poem represents a stage between the generalized horror at the prospect of civil war (*Epod.* 7) and the celebration of a victory over a foreign foe from the luxurious and decadent east, hymned in *Ode* 1.37. In *Epode* 16 Horace associates himself with the better men (*melior pars*, 15), the republican faction defeated at Philippi. Horace declares that those *indocili melior grege* ("better than the common herd," 16.37) have one course open to them: to abandon Rome to the *indocilis grex*. The phrase *uate me* ("poet's voice," 16.66) is significant, in that Horace assumes the authority of a seer, claiming truth for his vision of the Blessed Isles. In this poem, written after Philippi, and before Horace's adoption by Maecenas, it seems that the bleakness of tone is a genuine expression of pessimism. He has despaired of Rome's stubbornly self-destructive nature. This is a feeling similar to that inspired by a reading of *Epode* 7. Horace provides a solution, namely a journey to the west, a *fuga* ("flight") following the example of the pious Aeneas. *Pietas* ("duty") is a prerequisite of the people who are to undertake this venture. This is made clear at line 66, but also earlier in the poem at line 39, soon after the voyage is first mooted. *Virtus* ("courage") is a prerequisite. It is difficult to imagine how the pessimism of this poem, written when the author believed that the continuing cycle of self-destructive civil strife would never cease, could profitably be inserted into a collection intended primarily, according to conventional wisdom, as a first step in the construction of a campaign of poetic propaganda in favor of Octavian. Watson's comments are pertinent. Following his line of interpretation, *Epode* 16 might be seen as an indication of the despair from which Octavian's victory had dragged the right-thinking men of Rome. The victory of Octavian made westward flight unnecessary, since Octavian was the new Aeneas and was in Rome. The journey was not into the west, but back to the future. Later Horace, in public at least, abandoned despair to declare in the *Carmen Saeculare* and *Odes* 4 that a new century was born. The *Carmen Saeculare* is the poetical expression of the Augustan propaganda of the *Res Gestae*. The new golden age is a time of peace and prosperity, of moral and economic health, of joyous worship of hopefully tutelary deities. By contrast the Golden Isles of *Epode* 16 were a place where negatives were lacking rather than where positives abounded.

Recruit

Griffin⁷ discusses the nature of satire, the satirist and the “satiric voice”, as do Freudenburg,⁸ DuQuesnay⁹ and Kennedy.¹⁰ Griffin summarizes the “consensus” view of satire:

A work of satire is designed to attack vice or folly. To this end it uses wit or ridicule. Like polemical rhetoric, it seeks to persuade an audience that something or someone is reprehensible or ridiculous; unlike pure rhetoric, it engages in exaggeration and some sort of fiction. But satire does not forsake the “real world” entirely. Its victims come from that world, and it is this fact (together with a darker or sharper tone) that separates satire from pure comedy. Finally, satire usually proceeds by means of a clear reference to some moral standards or purposes.¹¹

This theory finds its origins in the manifesto found in *Satires* 1.4, 1.10 and 2.1. The conventional view never questions whether satire has in fact a moral purpose, whether as Diomedes claimed its main function is in fact directed *ad carpenda hominum uitia* (“for calumniating the vices of men”).¹² The element of play is ignored, as is the exploratory and provocative nature of satire. All is moral seriousness. Witness Kernan, who describes the satirist as seeing “the world as a battlefield between a definite, clearly understood good, which he represents, and an equally clear-cut evil, and he always retains his monolithic certainty.”¹³ Bullitt declares that “satire is best able to develop from a basis of general agreement on moral and intellectual standards.”¹⁴ Horace, however, admits and celebrates the fact of moral and intellectual diversity in the dedication of the first book of *Satires* to Maecenas, where the keywords of both Epicureanism and Stoicism, *fors* (“chance”) and *ratio* (“reason,” *Sat.* 1.1.2) are cited as possible reasons for the direction of men’s lives and their μεμψιμοιρία (“discontent”). The mature poet of *Epistles* is still well aware of this diversity as expressed in *Epistle* 1.1.13–19. Horace explores rival moralities and provokes discussion among his audience.

⁷ Griffin (1994).

⁸ Freudenburg (1993).

⁹ DuQuesnay (1984).

¹⁰ Kennedy (1992).

¹¹ Griffin (1994) 1.

¹² Keil (1857) 1.485–6.

¹³ Kernan (1959) 22.

¹⁴ Bullitt (1954) 1.

Moral certainties, uncritically held, are the beginning rather than the end and underpinning of satirical writing. Questions are posed but never definitively answered. As Griffin puts it:

Moral principles are set into a context of life as it must be lived, where what we ought to do is conditioned and even limited by what we can afford to do and what we are permitted to do.¹⁵

Some of these defining conditions relate to the political context within which the text of Horace's *Satires* was composed and the relationship of the poet to regimes and ideologies. Were, then, Horace's *Satires* political? If so, how, if it is a given that political satire is more commonly subversive rather than supportive of any regime? Who writes political satire? Ben Jonson presents the satirist Macilente as:

A man well parted, a sufficient scholar, and traveled; who (wanting that place in the world's account which he thinks his merit capable of) falls into such an envious apoplexy, with which his judgement is so dazzled and distasted that he grows violently impatient of any opposite happiness in another.¹⁶

This sounds truer of Juvenal's initial satiric *persona* than that of Horace, though there is evidence of status anxiety in his *Satires*.¹⁷ Griffin points out that the English satirists John Donne, John Marston and Joseph Hall "wrote about and for a small and intensively competitive world in which they hoped to find a place." This is reminiscent of Horace's place, as depicted in the first book of satires, until material needs were satisfied in the circle of Maecenas and by the gift of the Sabine Farm.

The received wisdom used to be that Horace's *Satires* were not political. Typical is McGann who talked of "the generally apolitical nature of the *Satires*,"¹⁸ a view echoed by Williams¹⁹ and Rudd.²⁰ When in 1984 DuQuesnay chose to swim against the tide, he was criticized by Rudd for using the term "political" in a "rather extended sense of the word." An antidote to the antediluvian scholarship that seeks, in a very

¹⁵ Griffin (1994) 44.

¹⁶ Ostovich (2001) 102.

¹⁷ McNeill (2001) for a valuable discussion of Horace's constant reconstruction of self in the face of both insecurity and success.

¹⁸ McGann (1973) 59–72.

¹⁹ Williams (1982) 3–27.

²⁰ Rudd (1982) 74: "[few] of these [*Satires* and *Epodes*] touch on politics and those that do convey attitudes of disgust (*Epode* 4), disillusion (*Satire* 1.6) or despair (*Epodes* 7 and 16)."

political way, to reaffirm the hierarchies and worthiness of its own institutions through the orthodox/conservative readings of the Classics was produced by Kennedy in 1992. He makes the point in his discussion of the dynamism of political and literary terminology that “modern political discourse tends to the quiescent and the ranking of e.g. ‘political’ with ‘disruptive’, ‘agitational’ and to exclude the ‘consensual’ and the ‘integrative’.”²¹ Kennedy argues that “The *Satires*, with their potent mixture of unremarkable received wisdom (that is the ‘knowledge’ and beliefs according to which Roman society organized itself) and their mild reassuring tone, and their avoidance or softening of whatever in the circumstances of their composition might have been perceived as controversial, sectarian, or antagonistic, are an integrational text par excellence.”²² Accordingly, they are highly political in that they might be thought to support the new regime through the evidence of the career of their author, which demonstrated, for example, the *aequanimitas* (“good will”) of Octavian—for did not Horace himself fight on the losing side at Philippi, and is not *aequanimitas* a virtue much approved of in the *Satires*? It was a cunning stroke of the regime to adopt into its ranks a gifted former member of the opposition, a survivor of Philippi, especially if he were granted a limited license to be independent.

The poems provide a picture of a group by whom one should feel privileged to be ruled. Maecenas is portrayed as a man whose *amicitia* is to be valued to the highest degree (*Sat.* 1.6, 2.6). The disadvantages of being too close to the great are also revealed, suggesting implicitly that, although duty calls the honorable client to tasks in the city, the sensible man, as soon as he may, leaves the *fumum strepitumque Romae* (“smoke and din of Rome,” *Carm.* 3.29.12) to those best fitted to deal with the affairs of state, to the ‘gods’ of contemporary society. As Kennedy puts it, “they [the *Satires*] were part of the process whereby the young Octavian of the proscriptions of the 40s B.C. was transformed into the saviour of the republic at Actium.”²³ The implicit message is that power is the perquisite of a select few best fitted to wield it. In the *Odes* it is made clear that Antony and Cleopatra were not fit, although, even at the time of the treaty of Brundisium, and soon after, there are hints that before an open breach occurred between Octavian and Antony

²¹ Kennedy (1992) 30.

²² Kennedy (1992) 33.

²³ Kennedy (1992) 33.

there was preparation for the propaganda war against Antony and Cleopatra. Horace is silent about the political purpose of the journey to Brundisium (*Sat.* 1.5). More important is the stress he places on the good fellowship and friendship of those making the journey. The apparent apoliticality is actually highly political in the reading of a politicized audience. Kennedy writes: "The so-called 'personal' is the political in that the constitution and exercises of power involves compliance. It can be precisely those things that present themselves as apolitical that are the most actively political in allowing power to be accumulated and exercised beyond the notice of those involved."²⁴ The *Satires* of Horace have such a political dimension. The reading/interpretation of this political dimension depends on its articulation, which is dependent on Horace's depiction of himself and his relationship with Maecenas and the other "gods" with whom he consorts (cf. *Sat.* 2.6.51–3).

Herein lies the problem, however, of the veridical value of Horace's "autobiographical" comment in the *Satires* and, in the light of recent scholarship, the status of the first person satiric *persona* as a representation of the "real" Horace. This is an important question, given Horace's use of "himself" in the *Satires* and elsewhere in the role of a cautionary *exemplum* against a particular form of folly, or, alternatively, as a model to be followed.²⁵ Freudenburg describes the demolition of the autobiographical approach crediting Anderson with being: "the first to recognize and take seriously the conventional nature of Horace's satiric persona."²⁶ He quotes Anderson:

He strikes us as a considerably older man, possessing the wisdom of experience, serenely above the materialistic pursuits of his fellow men, capable of a self-irony which only the profoundest self-restraint and self-analysis will permit. How much effort must have gone into the creation of that character by a young man not quite thirty, I leave to the reader's imagination. The main point is that Horace produced a Socratic satirist probably quite unrepresentative of himself.²⁷

Anderson's was a transitional and seminal work. It lay (as pointed out by Brown)²⁸ between the biographical excesses of Fraenkel, who found Horace's self-portraiture "the most attractive and successful aspect of the *Satires* and their 'proper end'" and the iconoclastic excesses of

²⁴ Kennedy (1992) 34.

²⁵ McNeill (2001).

²⁶ Freudenburg (1993) 9.

²⁷ Anderson (1982) 29.

²⁸ Brown (1993) 13–14.

Freudenburg, who sees the satiric first person *persona* of *Satires* 1, as consciously flawed, as an “addled rustic elder,”²⁹ constructed on the model of the unsympathetic sententious *senex* of Roman comedy, as is, according to Freudenburg, the portrait of Horace’s father:

The speaker of the diatribes is the sworn enemy of subtlety and nuance. He boasts of his *libertas* in *Satires* 1.4, defending his right to lampoon. He is frequently obscene. Social conventions, for example in matters of sex, mean little to him. He speaks his mind as a good Cynic, whatever the consequences. He projects the image of a man with a mission, out to convert. At times he is pushy and oppressive. Unlike Socrates, who claims not to “know” anything, the satirist is often disrespectful of his hearer and dogmatic; he does not seriously engage his listener in a dialectical process, he harangues.... All this was readily apparent to the ancient reader.³⁰

It is unlikely that Maecenas would be happy to be praised for his discrimination in selecting friends in *Satire* 1.4, if one such friend had been depicted in the preceding poems as some form of oaf rather than as a self deprecatory but basically honorable and well intentioned convert to the Octavian cause. Freudenburg shows, however—perhaps by a learned *reductio ad absurdum*—that interpretation of the *Satires* via a quest for autobiographical validity is at best misleading, at worst downright dangerous, unsound, and even impossible. According to Freudenburg, the “satirist is a moralising buffoon” and because “Horace is a dramatist,” the “lines separating real life and life on the comic stage have become severely blurred.”³¹ Hardly surprising if life imitates art, which imitates life.

What then is the purpose of the *Satires*? Simply to amuse? All *delectare* (“pleasure”) and no *prodesse* (“benefit”)? How can they be enjoyed or be begun to be understood, either in their own day or ever after, outside their political and social context? Taking a point from Duquesnay, is it likely that they have no real explicit or implicit political or social comment to make, when one remembers that this is the first work produced to order by Horace, after his adoption into the circle of Maecenas, and at the critical time of the conflict with Sextus Pompeius, when the organization of opinion in favor of Octavian was of the utmost importance, and when Octavian was making a point, of welcoming back into the Roman fold those who had chosen to fight with Sextus Pompeius?

²⁹ Freudenburg (1993) 12.

³⁰ Freudenburg, (1993) 12.

³¹ Freudenburg (1993) 39–41.

DuQuesnay writes:

Certainly it cannot be demonstrated that anything which Horace tells us in the satires is actually untrue. There is obviously the question of selectivity and omission, but the fact remains that the picture which Horace presents of himself and his friends is completely plausible and clearly intended to be so. This is a technique that Horace has taken from Lucilius.... But it is also a technique which has interesting affinities with those employed by the ancient biographers, who were well aware that "it is not always in the most glorious actions that virtue or badness are revealed; indeed it is often a little action, a saying or a jest that reveals character more than battles etc." (Plutarch, Alexander, 1.2).³²

A middle course needs to be steered between Fraenkel's embrace of the autobiographical and the blinkered excesses of Freudenburg. DuQuesnay's reading gives an extreme political reading of the poems, but has the merit that it understands "political" as something other than automatically pejorative in meaning. Brown, desperately seeking the middle ground, avers:

Obviously the poems include much authentic information about Horace's life, which he had neither motive nor opportunity to invent and which the Suetonian biography usually corroborates: but allowance has to be made for selectivity and playful or ironic misrepresentation.... At the same time it is the personality presented by the *Satires* of an easy going, sensible, rational, and constructive critic, an "outspoken friend" or *liber amicus* in the terminology of 1.4.132, committed to clearly defined artistic ideals and an engaging raconteur and ironist who can find amusement in his own misadventures and admit his own shortcomings, that many readers find the most attractive feature of the poems, even if in the last resort this personality, which must at least relate very closely to an ideal of himself in the poet's mind, is to be defined as that of "the satirist" rather than that of the historical Horace.³³

Horace, as a client of Maecenas, is at pains to show the circle of Maecenas and, by extension the circle of Octavian, in the best possible light. This is the purpose (*pace* Freudenburg) of *Satires* 1.6, 1.9, and 2.6. Relations between Octavian and Antony were delicate at the time of the composition of the first book of *Satires*, written as they were "between the years 38, when their (Horace's and Maecenas') *amicitia* began, and the winter of 36/35, when they were 'published.'"³⁴ Octavian was

³² Duquesnay (1984) 26.

³³ Brown (1993) 12.

³⁴ Duquesnay (1984) 21.

involved in the struggle with Sextus Pompeius, which he could only bring to a successful conclusion at Naulochus in September 36 because of the implicit support of Antony, gained at the council of Brundisium. Is there any anticipation of the future hostilities with Antony in the *Satires*? In 1.5 no clear mention is made of the reason for the journey to Brundisium. The description of the journey and the adventures of the friends along the way, however, does paint an intimate and pleasant picture of the entourage. More obvious pleasure is betrayed at the meeting with Maecenas, Vergil, Varius, and Plotius than at the arrival of Antony's agent Fonteius Capito, described disparagingly and with more than a hint of a sexual slur as *ad unguem factus homo, Antoni, non ut magis alter, amicus* ("a man tailored to perfection, second to none as a friend to Antony," *Sat.* 1.5.32–3).

At *Satires* 2.3.239–42 the satirist tells of how Aesopus' son swallowed a pearl of great price. Muecke notes:

M. Clodius Aesopus's son inherited 20,000,000 sesterces from his father (Macrob. *Sat.* 3.14.14) the famous tragic actor (*Epist.* 2.1.82), and friend of Cicero. The story about the pearl is also told by Valerius Maximus (9.1.2) who describes the son as 'of not only abandoned but even maniacal extravagance'. Pliny mistakenly attributes the exploit to his father, and tells the same story of Cleopatra (*HN* 9.119ff.).³⁵

As Antony's amatory peccadilloes might be brought to mind by incidents and descriptions in *Satires* 1.2, reminiscent of slurs repeated in Cicero's *Philippics*, condemning him as not "sound," the notorious extravagance of the eastern and exotic court of Cleopatra is brought to mind by the tale of the fate of this great pearl. It matters not whether the story is fact or fiction. What does matter is whether such a tale would have been current at the time *Satires* 2 was published, when "the battle of Actium had been won and Octavian's power acknowledged as supreme (*Satires*, 2.1.11, *Caesaris inuicti res*),"³⁶ so that the reference to Cleopatra's gross extravagance, and by implication that of Antony, might have been recognized. As there is implicit support for the ethos of the new regime, there may be also implicit criticism of the opposition. Furthermore, in English satire and eulogy, historical personages were praised by encomiasts, Spencer, for example, and attacked by satirists such as Pope through the medium of fictitious, allegorical

³⁵ Muecke (1993) 158.

³⁶ Muecke (1993) 1.

figures. It is likely that attacks on Octavian's enemies were also encoded in the less than flattering depictions of, say, Agamemnon in 2.3, with his overwhelming and crazed ambition. Horace's *Satires* along with the *Epodes* are far more subtle and politically loaded than it has been the conventional wisdom to believe.

Survivor and Critic

Horace was a survivor constantly rewriting himself according to the demands of each genre ventured, and to the demands of his personal situation. In the *Satires* Horace developed those skills which enabled him to comment in critical vein on contemporary issues, without endangering his safety or reputation. His Epicurean aim is encapsulated in the notion *haec est uita solutorum misera ambitione grauique* ("This is the life of men freed from wretched and grievous ambition," *Sat.* 1.6.128–9). To advocate such strategies of survival, however, is to advocate an ethos at odds with the notions of civic duty and responsibilities fostered by the new regime. To advocate such strategies is subversive of the Augustan ideal, the congeniality of which to him he was at pains to express. Herein lies a continuing tension discussed in learned fashion by Fowler, who comes to the conclusion that "Horace can look not up to, but down on the Great and the Bad,"³⁷ which seems to reflect the Day-Lewis quandary of the epigraphic poem to this essay.

Strategies of survival and for implicit criticism are rewritten in the lyric medium of *Odes* 1 to 3. Horace advocates withdrawal from official life and celebrates that withdrawal in poetry which nods in the direction of Epicurean *ataraxia*, suggesting that the company of the "Great and the Bad" is not an undiluted pleasure (a notion intimated at *Sat.* 2.6.32–5), though "Bad" is not a word it would be safe for Horace to use of his political masters.

Several poems, including *Odes* 1.4, 1.7, 2.1 and 2.3, are addressed to men who were survivors of the war and beneficiaries of Augustan *clementia*. In addressing them Horace is not averse to indulging in criticism, of taking the names of the great and their attributes and titles in vain. He links the name of Jupiter (and other gods) in such poems as *Odes* 1.1, 1.17, 1.21, 1.34, 2.5 and 2.6 with that of Augustus. One accepts such irreverence in Ovid and Propertius. Horace's criticisms of

³⁷ Fowler (1995) 266.

the regime are more subtle and the more effective from being launched from within the magic circle itself by a man *libertino patre natus* ("born of a freedman father," *Sat.* 1.6.45, 46), *Fortunae filius* ("the son of Fortune," *Sat.* 2.6.49) who, in the hostile popular view, actually consorted with the "gods."

Ode 1.4 reads as a hymn to peace after the civil war's long "winter of our discontent": the war is over, we have survived, but death still stalks its prey and so, Sestius, we must live as best we can in good Epicurean style. L. Sestius was a republican, an admirer of M. Brutus. He survived the war, was proscribed and pardoned. He was made suffect in the middle of 23, when Augustus resigned the consulship. Nisbet and Hubbard suggest that the identity of the addressee is of no significance in this case.³⁸ Taken on its own this poem may be considered innocent of political bias or spin. In conjunction with others in the collection with more obvious overtones, however, *Ode* 1.4 reads as political allegory. L. Munatius Plancus, the addressee of *Ode* 1.7 was also a survivor. Velleius Paterculus (2.83.1) describes him as *morbo proditor*, while Cicero was more tactful in a letter to Plancus: *Scis profecto...fuisse quoddam tempus cum homines existimarent te nimis servire temporibus* ("You obviously understand...that there was a time when men thought that you were too much a slave of circumstance," *Fam.* 10.3.3). The point of the poem is that Plancus' native Tibur and the tumbling Anio is a more appealing place to enjoy the benefits of peace than the cities of the East. Plancus is urged to be *sapiens* ("sensible," 1.7.17) and forget *tristitiam uitaeque labores* ("the sadness and agonies of life," 18). There will be a warm welcome waiting when he returns to Tibur from his active service, there will be wine to ease his cares.

Ode 2.1 is addressed to C. Asinius Pollio as he embarks on a history of the civil wars. Pollio had been a supporter of Julius Caesar "and, in the subsequent struggle between Antony and Octavian, remained honourably neutral."³⁹ The praise of Pollio's accomplishments is calculated not to offend Octavian. A poem in honor of Pollio may provide a useful vehicle for airing one's prejudices about the events which were to be the subject of the historian's study. The address to Pollio is a sophisticated reworking in lyric mode of the technique of the carefully characterized interlocutor brought to a state of perfection in the second book of *Satires*. In this ode the addressee becomes a mute partner

³⁸ Nisbet and Hubbard (1970) 68.

³⁹ Wickham (1912) 1.130.

in the relationship between the poet and his reader. By anticipating with vivid and expertly articulated imagination the subject matter of the history to come, Horace enables himself to pass comments critical of the civil war and its shocking waste of both human and material resources. That Horace believes that Pollio is qualified to write this history is evident from the encomiastic style in which his achievements are described. That the tragic *modos/ludumque Fortuna* ("fashions and sport of Fortune," *Carm.* 2.1.2–3)⁴⁰ have resulted in the elevation of Octavian to power can be acknowledged as fortunate, while simultaneously pity is extended towards the losers. It is interesting that Fortuna may be thought of as composing a poem, a tragi-comedy of epic proportions on the roller-coaster ride of Roman late republican and early imperial history. History itself is a composition written by Fortuna. Octavian and his company are merely players. *Fortuna* is Horace's Muse and Pollio's inspiration. By acknowledging Pollio as tragedian Horace characterizes him as ideally equipped to write a prose history of the tragedy of the civil wars, where pity and fear can be evoked by the descriptions of the *modos/ludumque Fortuna grauisque/principum amicitias et arma/nondum expiatis uncta cruoribus,/periculosae plenum opus aleae* ("fashions and sport of Fortune, the dangerous alliances of the great, the bloody arms as yet unexpiate, a work full of peril and risk," *Carm.* 2.1.2–6). If the civil wars were tragic, who were the tragic heroes? Pompey? Note *magnos* ("great men," 2.1.21). Cato? Note *Catonis nobile letum* ("the noble death of Cato," 1.12.35–6). Antony? Who was the tragic heroine? Cleopatra? Note *Ode* 1.37. In *Ode* 2.1 Horace uses the topic of Pollio's history to indicate his lingering sorrow regarding the process, if not the outcome of civil war. In the final stanza of 2.1 Horace takes himself skillfully in hand in a self-deprecating manner by claiming he is trespassing on another's territory, that he should return to the cave of love, leaving the songs of sadness and lament to a Simonides, or a Pollio. Horace withdraws in favor of the master and a tactical withdrawal is one of Horace's more obvious strategies of survival.

Ode 2.3 is addressed to another survivor of the war, Q. Dellius. Dellius was an adherent of Antony in a number of questionable activities.⁴¹ He changed sides, deserting Antony before Actium. Even this survivor, this

⁴⁰ One is irresistibly reminded here of the role of Fortuna in Petronius' *Bellum Civile* in the *Satyricon*.

⁴¹ Nisbet and Hubbard (1970) 51–2.

desultorem bellorum civilium ("circus-rider of the civil war," Sen. *Suas.* 1.7) and hedonist, however, needed spiritual reinforcement *rebus in arduis* ("in pressing times") by means of advice from Horace. Moderation is recommended to Maecenas' brother-in-law Licinius Murena in *Ode* 2.10. That advice, however, fell on deaf ears with fatal consequences. Murena fell out of favor with Augustus and that fall also contributed to the relative eclipse of Maecenas himself. We have advice from the poet to a political high-flyer whose supportive wax was fatally melted as he soared too close to the sun. Here we have advice addressed to an individual who did not survive. Licinius did not survive because he ignored the poet's advice, but because his actions were not in keeping with such advice. What is condemned as commonplace advice may take on a far greater relevance at a time when Augustus felt insecure about his own position, because of ill health, and about the future of the regime he had set in place. It is tempting to read Jupiter at 2.3.15–16 as a code for Augustus. Horace, is fond of using meteorological and seasonal phenomena as a symbolic code for the sharp changes of fortune which threaten the contemporary Roman. Jupiter as sky god is supremely responsible for shifts in the actual weather, as Augustus is responsible for the dubious nature of the political climate. Such allegorical treatments of the body politic can distance the poet from accusations of negativity towards the regime in general and Augustus in particular. An apparently innocuous poem founded upon commonplace principles drawn from the doctrines of the Hellenistic schools may have a much closer connection with political reality than might at first appear.

That Horace and some of his republican friends did survive is a testament to the politically astute *clementia* of the man who was to become *princeps*; however, that Horace felt the need to construct and communicate strategies of survival is an index of the delicate times in which he lived.

Augustan Eulogist

In the *Epistles* Horace produces a "synthesis of the conversational hexameter of his *Sermones* and . . . the more personal addresses found in the lyric odes."⁴² Horace (as has been noted)⁴³ is meticulous in the way he

⁴² Mayer (1994) 1.

⁴³ Mayer (1994) 3: "As in the *Odes* the addressee is not necessarily a convention, for the chosen theme may reflect his personal interests and preoccupations . . ."; cf. 8–9.

tailors his material for his recipients, and tailors his recipients to produce an appropriate response in his readership. Thus the recipients are an integral part of the complex strategies by which the poet is empowered to communicate less than totally popular ideas with impunity. In *Epistle* 1.7 Horace tells Maecenas with firmness and tact that he seeks an honorable and permanent retirement from his services to his patron in the city. As he suggests in *Epistle* 1.1.4, *non eadem est aetas, non mens* (“it is not the same age; my mind is different”). In the *Carmen Saeculare* and the fourth book of *Odes*, however, we have an apparent change of heart motivated by a personal request from Augustus for overtly propagandistic works to celebrate the regime. The *Carmen Saeculare* is a hymn to celebrate in lyric choral performance Augustus’ achievement of peace in what is to some the obsequious manner of a turncoat.⁴⁴ And the fourth book of *Odes* is the final installment of lyrics, requested by Augustus. Putnam re-evaluated these works.⁴⁵ He describes the *Carmen* as giving “a glowing picture of contemporary Rome,”⁴⁶ an “official view” certainly but, according to Putnam, “a commissioned masterpiece.”⁴⁷ Significant is the reference to Aeneas’ journey:

condito mitis placidusque telo
 supplices audi pueros, Apollo;
 siderum regina bicornis, audi,
 Luna, puellas.
 Roma si uestrum est opus Iliaeque
 litus Etruscum tenuere turmae,
 iussa pars mutare lares et urbem
 sospite cursu,
 cui per ardentem sine fraude Troiam
 castus Aeneas patriae superstes
 liberum muniuit iter, daturus
 plura relictis:
 di, probos mores docili iuuentae,
 di, senectuti placidae quietem,
 Romulae genti date remque prolemque
 et decus omne.
 Quaeque uos bobus ueneratur albis
 clarus Anchisae Venerisque sanguis,

⁴⁴ E.g., Lyne (1995) 13, 29.

⁴⁵ Putnam (1986); Putnam (2000).

⁴⁶ Putnam (1986) 3.

⁴⁷ Putnam (1986) 8.

impetret, bellante prior, iacentem
lenis in hostem.

(Hor. *Carm. Saec.* 33–52)

Apollo, gentle and calm, your shaft now retired,
give ear to our suppliant youth. Diana, twin horned,
lady Moon and Queen of the stars, give ear
to our girls.

If Rome is your great work and Trojan warriors hold
Etruscan shores, a group required to change
their household gods and city on a journey
made safe, a group that was led
safe and sound by holy Aeneas through a city
in flames, a survivor, who forged a route
to freedom and fated to give his men
more than was lost...

And let the noble scion win, with sacrifice
of oxen white and oxen blood, whatever he desires,
Augustus, sprung from Venus and Anchises, clement
and superior to warring enemies thrown down.

Epode 16, inspired by Aeneas' journey from Troy to Italy, recommends in a spirit of despair a second flight westward. The poet uses similar material in the *Carmen Saeculare* in a positive manner. The poet recycles material to suit the demands of the moment. Whether or not Horace's identification of a new age of gold with the age of Augustus is a sincere one is problematic, a question incapable of a secure answer. Horace's tendency in poems not so directly commissioned as the *Carmen Saeculare*, however, is to inflect/infect with humor apparently serious pieces, such as *Ode* 3.6: an ostensibly propagandistic piece, where he has fun at the expense of such an iconic figure as the rustic *matrona*. *Ode* 3.6 expresses views approved by Augustus. Rome suffers because of a lack of *pietas*, a failing which goes back to Romulus' murder of his brother, blighting the moral example set by *pius Aeneas*. The view that sexual morality has collapsed under the influence of Greeks and of wealth from the east is appropriate in that it refers to the career of Antony and his affair with Cleopatra. The satirical tone is maintained by the suggestion that marriage's purpose, the getting of new children born to be warriors, has changed to the procuring of wealth by whatever means, including the prostitution of a wife. Such behavior was not a part of the *mores maiorum* which brought Rome to the hegemony of the world. Rather what did bring Rome's success about, supposedly, were the values of a tough rusticity embodied in hard men, dutiful alike to the land, the family, the state and the gods. The depiction of Italy's

rustic past, however, is tainted by the mockery of rustic sons at the beck and call of an imperious mother:

...rusticorum mascula militum
 proles, Sabellis docta ligonibus
 uersare glaebas et seuerae
 matris ad arbitrium recisos
 portare fustis, sol ubi montium
 mutaret umbras et iuga demeret
 bubus fatigatis, amicum
 tempus agens abeunte curru.
 damnosa quid non inminuit dies?
 aetas parentum peior auis tulit
 nos nequiores, mox daturos
 progeniem uitiosorem.

(Hor. *Carm.* 3.6.37–48)

...a virile yeoman soldiery
 of yesteryear, skilled tillers of the sod
 with Sabine hoe, who at the matriarch's
 stern request
 bring fresh cut kindling wood, until
 the sun's departing car has shifted hill
 top shadows, eased the yokes from aching ox
 neck, brought on the pleasant time...
 What thing does not pernicious time destroy?
 Our parents' age was worse than their
 own parents' age and spawned then us, worse still,
 about to birth a far more vicious progeny.

How, though, can the final stanza fit into a poem trumpeting the moral renaissance ushered in by Augustus' victory at Actium? Or is the pessimism mere convention, reminiscent of the moralizing of a Sallust or a Cicero? The change of tone to one of positive celebration in the fourth book of *Odes*—especially 4.5 and 4.15—is, according to Putnam, a result of Horace coming to terms with the political reality of Augustus' final victory and an ideological program which he could celebrate with a clear conscience. Poetic integrity is not compromised any more than it was in *Ode* 1.37, where Actium is celebrated and Horace takes an unexpected and humanitarian tack:

fatale monstrum: quae generosius
 perire quaerens nec muliebriter
 expauit ensem nec latentis
 classe cita reparauit oras,
 ausa et iacentem uisere regiam

uoltu sereno, fortis et asperas
 tractare serpentes, ut atrum
 corpore conbiberet uenenum,
 deliberata morte ferocior:
 saeuis Liburnis scilicet inuidens
 priuata deduci superbo
 non humilis mulier triumpho.
 (Hor. *Carm.* 1.37.21–32)

the deadly beast; she sought a death
 more noble though, nor did not dread,
 effeminate, the sword nor sought
 in her swift fleet some secret shore;
 intrepid too to see her palace fall,
 her face resigned, and bold enough
 to grasp the rasping snakes, allow
 her body drink the venom black,
 a calculated death and so more fierce,
 denying the savage Italian ships her life,
 would not be led as captive, royalty
 denied, in Roman triumph arrogant.

This is not an uncritical celebration of Cleopatra's suicide, as Nisbet and Hubbard read it in an almost willful misrepresentation of Horace's description of the death of Cleopatra:

Even in the latter half of the poem, which alone has any magnanimity, Cleopatra commits suicide only to cheat the *carنيفex*; the crucial word *generosius* (21) is usually misunderstood. The distortion of history is almost as great as in the romantic picture... Horace writes as an orator: he expresses one viewpoint with astonishing power, but he does not increase our understanding of the way things happen. Cleopatra was 39 when she died, and an ugly and vindictive woman... but she did not captivate two great men simply by strategic resources and political acumen.⁴⁸

This is insensitive. In *Epode* 9 Antony's subjection to Cleopatra and her troop of eunuchs is a matter of shame for right thinking Romans. Part of that message is re-utilized in *Ode* 1.37. The eunuchs are still present, a reminder of the bizarre nature of this foreigner's entourage. Cleopatra is drunk on ambition and Egyptian wine, a clear and present threat to Rome and empire. This is now, according to the spin of the day, a foreign enemy. Octavian is fighting a campaign to safeguard Rome and Roman superiority over the barbarian. Horace, though,

⁴⁸ Nisbet and Hubbard (1970) 410–11.

can still feel admiration for this queen *quae generosius/perire quaerens nec mulibriter/expauit ense* ("who sought a death more noble though, nor did not dread, effeminate, the sword," *Carm.* 1.37.21–3), who refuses humiliation as victim of a Roman triumph.

The agendas of Horace and of Octavian coincide to a very great degree. Horace is relieved that the foreign threat has been averted. He portrays Cleopatra as *fatale monstrum* ("deadly beast") to indicate the horror of the threat from which Octavian delivered Rome. For this he is grateful; however, the sympathetic humanity of the poet convinces him of the need to add elements of nobility and dignity to the queen's death. In Vergil's case that humanity is betrayed in the depiction of Dido, of Camilla and of Turnus, Italy's Hector to Aeneas's Achilles. The major difference between the humanity of Vergil and that of Horace is that the humanity of Vergil can be encoded within the relative anonymity of the epic form, whereas Horace finds a continuing tension between self and Augustan expectation in the composition of more personal poetic genres such as lyric and iambic, satire and literary epistle. In the significantly later *Carmen Saeculare* and fourth book of *Odes* such tension becomes less apparent. This change warns us that at a juncture when Horace sings the praises of *custos Augustus* ("our guardian Augustus") opportunities for misplaced humour and irony were diminishing. But even here Horace displays an individualizing streak in his confident assertion that it is these songs themselves that will ensure the actual immortality of the *princeps*.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE POLITICS OF ARISTOCRATIC COMPETITION: INNOVATION IN LIVY AND AUGUSTAN ROME

Matthew B. Roller

How do we locate the “politics” of a literary text? Most people would probably agree that “politics” refers to a struggle for power, as members of society seek to assert and sustain claims upon the whole or upon others. The *locus classicus* of such struggle is the formal, institutionalized setting of government, where people seek and discharge public offices, and compete to set and carry out particular policies or agendas. Thus one way to locate the politics of a literary text is to consider what it says about government and governmental operations. In Roman literary studies, questions about the “political” (in this sense) views of literary authors have been asked since at least the nineteenth century; however, this approach found a new vogue in the 1970s and 1980s as scholars turned away from the excessive decontextualization of New Criticism and sought to reconnect texts and authors with the social, cultural, and material environment within which literary production occurred. Regarding literature of the imperial age—when government was closely associated with the imperial regime—“political” questions were typically formulated as follows: What is the author’s opinion of the emperor, his regime, or of contemporary events? Through what techniques and devices does the author express his support/opposition? What influence does the regime itself have upon the author, what he says, and how he says it? The words “propaganda” and “patronage” often appear in such discussions, since scholars suspected that an author might be expressing, if only out of prudence, an (excessively?) positive image of the regime, and since his means of support—especially if provided by someone within the regime—might affect what he said and how he said it.¹

In due course, however, this approach came to seem unsatisfactory. In the first place, arguments for or against the imperial regime can be teased out of almost any author, depending how a scholar selects

¹ For these kinds of questions see, e.g., Woodman and West (1984) vii; Sullivan (1985) 19–73.

and marshalls quotations, how inclined she or he is to see irony, and so on. And with literary critics' increasing awareness of the complexity, mutability, and multifacetedness of the imperial regime itself, the quest for "for or against" judgments began to appear Procrustean if not incoherent.² Consequently, by the early 1990s, a broader, more flexible understanding of "politics" began to find currency in Roman studies, as in other areas of the humanities and social sciences. Retaining the idea that "politics" refers to a struggle for power through the assertion of claims against others, the broader understanding extends beyond government to embrace a variety of social arenas in which such struggles occur, and strategies by which agents compete for advantage. This broadened scope of the "political" has allowed the questions asked of literary texts to range more broadly and become more fundamental. For example: What other social rifts—beyond those between emperors and putatively dissident aristocratic writers—do literary texts reveal as generators of power struggles? Such a question directs our attention to contestation along gender lines, along ethnic lines (e.g., between urban Romans and Latins, or Latins and other Italians, or Italians and provincials), along class lines (e.g., between aristocrats and non-aristocrats), and among sectors of the aristocracy. In what arenas do our texts show these struggles being carried out, and what are the weapons with which the antagonists compete? This question spotlights (for example) the moral and aesthetic discourses that permeate Latin literature, inviting us to consider how the regimes of moral value established and exposed by everything from sexual insults to aesthetic judgments of poetry and art uphold the interests of some social sectors against others. And since it follows that literary texts can themselves be arenas for, and weapons in, struggles for power, a further question arises: how and to what extent do our texts themselves intervene in these contests? For literary texts not only describe and respond to "political" events, but may help constitute those events as such.³

Regarding Livy, the "political" question that scholars have traditionally asked is of the narrower type: what is the historian's view of Augustus and the Augustan dispensation? Admittedly, this question is tempting. The men were near contemporaries; a few texts have been taken to

² Feeney (1992) 1–5; Kennedy (1992) 26–30.

³ For such understandings of the "politics" of literature see, e.g., Edwards (1993) 1–4, 24–8; Habinek (1998) 3–14; Roller (1998) 265–7, 300; Roller (2001) 17–126.

suggest that Livy enjoyed some intimacy with the imperial household; and while the latter ninety-seven of Livy's original 142 books of the *Ab Urbe Condita* are lost, surviving summaries indicate that the first *princeps* figured prominently in the final twenty-seven of these—nearly a fifth of the work's original bulk.⁴ Livy must, indeed, have had views about Augustus. What were they? The abundant scholarship on this question has produced the widest imaginable spectrum of opinion;⁵ iconoclastic analyses by Deininger and Badian have shown why consensus is never likely to be reached.⁶ Yet even if there were consensus on this point, scholars would hardly have plumbed the enormous range of elements in Livy's text that are "political" in the broader, more flexible sense. Where and how does the text depict struggles for power and competing social claims more generally? How and to what extent might (at least some of) these depictions find a contemporary resonance? Can the text itself ever be seen as intervening in contemporary struggles? Through questions like these, we may grasp more comprehensively the ways in which Livy's text engages its contemporary society, and hence where its "politics" (in the broader sense) resides.⁷

Among the many kinds of social rifts and the accompanying power struggles that one might explore in Livy, I consider here one in particular: the competition among aristocrats for glory and prestige. I focus on Appius Claudius Caecus, a figure who Livy presents as transgressing

⁴ Intimacy: Tac. *Ann.* 4.34.3; Suet. *Claud.* 41; perhaps Livy 4.20.5–11 and Sen. *Nat.* 5.18.4. The *Periochae* first notice Octavian/Augustus in book 116, where he is mentioned as Caesar's heir; by book 142 the narrative reaches 9 BCE, the middle of Augustus' reign.

⁵ A search of *L'Année Philologique's* database reveals about a dozen articles entitled "Livy and Augustus" (*aut sim.*) in the interval 1959–2002; the question is also discussed in many longer studies of Livy's work or Augustan Rome.

⁶ Deininger (1985) 265–72; Badian (1993) 9–38.

⁷ Livy's "anachronisms," where he represents ancient events in contemporary terms (or, conversely, works out contemporary issues on an ancient canvas), have long been noted and discussed by scholars: these are one place we should look for his "politics" (in the broad sense). Recent works along these lines include Miles (1995) 211–19 on how depictions of marriage and rape in book 1 pertain to Augustan-era anxieties; Jaeger (1997) 182–3 on how Livy's written Rome and Augustus' built one cooperate and/or compete; Feldherr (1998) 223–4 *et passim* on how the language and imagery of contemporary public spectacle is used to connect individuals to the collective; and Chaplin (2001) 168–96 on Livy and Augustus' shared impulse to promote certain social values through exemplarity. In this chapter, then, I am not proposing a profoundly new and original way of understanding Livy's contemporary engagements: I merely observe that these engagements have "political" ramifications in the broad sense, and I offer some new readings expressly interpreted in "political" terms.

the boundaries of established competitive arenas and creating (or formalizing) a new competitive arena in the process. The nexus of innovation and competition is also explored elsewhere in Livy's history and is pertinent more generally to the situation of aristocrats early in the Augustan era when Livy wrote his surviving books. Indeed, it may pertain to Livy's own situation as probably a municipal elite who chose to make his name in Rome as a "professional historian."

Virtually every discussion of Appius cites De Sanctis' *dictum* that he is the first "personalità viva" of Roman history. Most of this "liveliness" is attributable to Livy. Without Livy's connected account in books 9–10 of the years 312–295 BCE, and of Appius' activities in that period, we would have a scatter of suggestive citations in various authors, along with the *elogium* from the Forum Augustum (see below)—enough to reveal a figure with unusual capabilities and involvements, but hardly sufficing to "animate" him. Yet, to my knowledge, no study has been devoted to examining how Livy constructs and deploys the figure of Appius in the context of his own history, and in light of his own aims and interests in these books. Historians have speculated at length on the aims and agendas of the historical Appius, extracting data from Livy's account, but—reasonably enough—rejecting or heavily modifying Livy's interpretations.⁸ Meanwhile, scholarly discussion of Appius within Livy is almost exclusively source-critical. Such analyses, however, rely upon assumptions about the nature of "factional politics" in Appius' and subsequent ages, about how closely Livy's sources are implicated in these factional politics, and about how transparent Livy's text is to the interpretations and biases of his sources, that are now considered highly problematic.⁹ For such reasons, many Livian scholars have turned away from source criticism in recent decades, seeking instead to recover and better understand Livy's own voice, agendas, and working methods.¹⁰ Like these scholars, I assume that Livy has constructed his work consciously and intentionally—by invention, selection, or both—to promulgate a vision of the past that addresses his and his readers' contemporary needs and interests. I seek to understand what those needs

⁸ On the state of these questions see Raaflaub, Richards, and Samons (1992) 34–50 with bibliography.

⁹ Notable among the (generally misguided) source-critical discussions are Mommsen (1962[1864]) 1.314–18; Ferenczy (1970) 79–83; Wiseman (1979) 86–90; and Humm (2001) 85–96.

¹⁰ See above, n. 7; also Kraus (1994).

are, and how Livy's version of events meets them. In this spirit, I offer an account of Appius' doings in books 9–10 that attends to how this figure participates in the dynamics of Livy's narrative. What, in Livy's construction of Appius, makes him seem so "alive?" A seemingly abrasive personality is part of it, as Appius is repeatedly shown in conflict with his peers. This, however, is but one device for portraying him as an innovator who establishes a novel arena of aristocratic competition and whose actions and values thereby diverge from those of his more conventional peers.

Appius first enters Livy's narrative at 9.29.5–30.2, the account of his tumultuous censorship (312 BCE). For virtually every censorial act, Livy remarks on the antagonism it arouses, and upon Appius' isolation in pursuing such a course. First, Appius' revision of the senate roll is met with blanket disapproval: his colleague Plautius, refusing to be associated with a revision he deems *infamis atque invidiosa* ("disgraceful and odious," 9.29.7), resigns the office, and the consuls of the following year, using similarly harsh language, reject the revised roll.¹¹ Livy resumes this discussion at 9.46.10–15, when he reports that the censors of 304 BCE overturned another of Appius' censorial reforms: he had distributed poor city-dwellers across all the tribes, which Livy seems to have understood as an attempt to gain power or influence (*opes*) by impacting the voting assemblies.¹² The resistance these measures provoke perhaps implies that they are novel and unprecedented. His innovativeness is stressed, however, when Livy reports that he refused to abdicate along with his colleague, and so continued on as sole censor (9.29.7–8; cf. 9.34.17–22); and that he refused to resign even after the

¹¹ *Consules...questi apud populum deformatum ordinem prava lectione senatus...negauerunt eam lectionem se, quae sine recti prauisque discrimine ad gratiam ac libidinem facta esset, obseruatuos* ("the consuls...complained before the people that the senate had been disfigured by a perverse revision of the membership...they announced that they would not accept that revision, which had been made in a willful and partisan spirit, without regard for right and wrong," 9.30.1–2).

¹² *Qui senatum primus...inquinaverit et, posteaquam eam lectionem nemo ratam habuit nec in curia adeptus erat quas petierat opes, urbanis humilibus per omnes tribus diuisis forum et campum corripit* ("who first debased the senate...and, after nobody accepted his revision as valid and he had failed to acquire the power in the senate house that he had sought, he perverted the tribal and centuriate assemblies by distributing the urban rabble across all the tribes," 9.46.10–11). The historical problems in understanding these purported tribal reforms are large: see Raaflaub, Richards, and Samons (1992) 39–42 and Oakley (1997) 3.629–35 for overview and bibliography. For my purposes, what matters is that Livy presents Appius as innovating against great opposition in the quest for personal advantage.

lawful 18 month term of this office had elapsed (9.33–4). With these notices, Livy underscores Appius' departure from exemplary models, the united disapproval of Romans of every social order, and Appius' own abrasive stubbornness.¹³ Yet another innovation, as Livy presents it, is that Appius as censor removed the cult rites of the Ara Maxima from the supervision of the Potitii, their traditional guardians. Such meddling with ancient rites, Livy avers, is risky: the entire family of Potitii died out within a year, and Appius himself was eventually blinded due to divine anger (9.29.9–11).¹⁴

Livy credits a more fundamental innovation to Appius at 9.42.1–4, when he enters upon his first consulship (307 BCE). We are told that Q. Fabius Rullianus, consul the previous year with P. Decius Mus, is prorogued in his command against the Samnites, *maxime Appio aduersante* ("over Appius' strong objections," 9.42.2); meanwhile, a new war against the Sallentini is allotted to the other incoming consul, L. Volumnius. Consequently, Livy says, Appius *Romae mansit ut urbanis artibus opes augeter quando belli decus penes alios esset* ("remained at Rome in order to grow his resources through urban arts, since the glory of war was in the hands of others," 9.42.4). This sentence likely explains Appius' opposition to Fabius being prorogued. For Livy presents to his readers a society in which war-fighting is far the most prestigious arena of aristocratic competition, and where celebrating triumphs, dedicating temples (and other monuments) from booty, and distributing booty to soldiers, are the chief ways of publicizing and enhancing the prestige of oneself and one's family.¹⁵ In such a society, an aristocrat cannot pass over lightly the chance to gain military glory during his consulship, when he holds *imperium*. Appius, seeing both possible wars in the hands

¹³ United disapproval: 9.33.5; cf. [Appius] *summa...inuidia omnium ordinum solus censuram gessit* ("to the vast annoyance of all classes, he continued as sole censor," 9.34.26). Abrasiveness, stubbornness: the tribune Sempronius at 9.34.22–4 accuses him of *superbia*, *peruicacia*, *audacia*, and *contemptus deorum* for refusing to abdicate; the (authorial) narrator twice attributes *pertinacia* to him (9.29.8, 10.26.6), and calls him *acer et ambitiosus* (10.15.8).

¹⁴ Divine vengeance is indeed slow (*post aliquot annos*), since Livy must imagine Appius as sighted seventeen years later, during his campaigns as praetor in 295. However, *Per.* 13 claims that he was long blind by 279, when he delivered the famous speech against peace with Pyrrhus. Conversely, Val. Max. 8.13.5 seems to imagine him as blind through most of his adult life—perhaps, indeed, blinded by Hercules in his censorial year (1.1.17). Discussion by Oakley (1997) 3.383.

¹⁵ Livy's depiction of the preeminence of war-fighting in this period is probably historically accurate: Harris (1979) 18–29; Hölkeskamp (1993) 22, 26. Oakley (1997) 3.548–50 discusses Appius' actions in this passage.

of others, is therefore (according to Livy) forced again to innovate: to make something of his consulship—to enhance his prestige and visibility—he must find a novel, non-military means to “grow his resources” (*opes auget*).¹⁶ “Urban arts” are the means he chooses. Later developments help clarify what these are. But in the meantime Livy’s reader, recalling the narrative of his censorship (9.29–30), may conjecture that these arts include the kinds of (non-military) activities mentioned there. Livy himself makes little of the gigantic, unprecedented public works that Appius undertook as censor—he merely notes that Appius’ name outshone his colleague Plautius’ by being attached to the road and aqueduct (9.29.5). Nevertheless, these public works were regarded by posterity—including Livy’s contemporaries and readers—as the chief monuments to the man, the objects that preserved and bestowed glory upon his name.¹⁷ Livy’s reader may also recall the narratives of earlier Appii Claudii, whom Livy made most visible in their domestic roles as antagonists of the plebs: thus the domestic focus of the current Appius might be thought to reprise an established familial pattern. In the event, though (as we shall see), this Appius will surpass his ancestors by remaking domestic politics altogether.¹⁸

The characterization of Appius continues to develop in book 10, where Livy engineers a series of face-to-face encounters between Appius and his principal competitors: Decius, Fabius, and Volumnius. Rossi has recently studied Livy’s syncretic technique, focusing on how Scipio and Hannibal are compared and contrasted in books 21–30.¹⁹ In book 10, Livy has created a smaller-scale but multilateral syncretism, with these four figures interacting in various bilateral combinations. To borrow a term from philosophers who study the ethics of art, this is a “virtue wheel,” a common device in multiple-character narratives, which can be defined

¹⁶ Similar situation and rhetoric at 4.24.3.

¹⁷ Appius was also “popularly” remembered for the temple of Bellona and the speech regarding Pyrrhus: see the Augustan *elogium* below; also, e.g., Cic. *Cael.* 34. Under Augustus, at least, roads could be repaired *ex manubiis*, thereby monumentalizing a successful general (Suet. *Aug.* 30). But nothing suggests the Appian way was built *ex manubiis*: indeed, Appius had apparently held no military command prior to his censorship.

¹⁸ Vasaly (1987) discusses the patterns set by the first four Appii Claudii in Livy 1–5; more generally Walter (2004) 121–30, and Oakley (1997) 3.357–66. Given this family tradition, it seems fitting that a new arena of aristocratic competition in *artes urbanae* be pioneered by an Appius. But the achievement is no less pioneering for being done by an Appius.

¹⁹ Rossi (2004) 359–81.

as “a studied array of characters who both correspond and contrast with each other along the dimension of a certain virtue or package of virtues.”²⁰ Here Livy defines the novel competitive niche that Appius is carving out by comparing his contemporaries’ relative abilities and deficiencies in domestic and military arts. The first such confrontation, a debate over a proposed *lex Ogulnia* (300 BCE) admitting plebeians to the augurate and pontificate (10.7.1), pits Appius in opposition to the measure against Decius in support of it. Decius, already graced with impeccable war-fighting credentials, here delivers a substantial oration (10.7.3–8.12) in which he assumes the mantle of spokesman for the plebeian nobility in its continuing struggle for empowerment against patrician privilege. In Appius, Decius has a patrician opponent conveniently connected to a *gens* renowned for its antagonism toward the plebs.²¹ Yet Livy gives Appius no speech to counter Decius’, and Decius’ argument sways the electoral assembly—hardly a success for the specialist in *urbanae artes*.

An encounter with Fabius shortly follows. Appius seeks to have himself elected consul along with Fabius for 296 BCE (10.15.7–8)—two patricians, in order (says Livy) to shut plebeians out of their lawful share of office. Yet Fabius, the incumbent consul presiding over the election, refuses to accept his own nomination, declaring that it would be illegal and set a bad example (10.15.10–11); Appius is then returned as consul along with the plebeian Volumnius, his consular colleague from eleven years earlier. Here Livy remarks, *nobilitas obiectare Fabio fugisse eum Ap. Claudium collegam, eloquentia civilibusque artibus haud dubie praestantem* (“The nobles criticized Fabius for avoiding Appius Claudius as his colleague, a man undoubtedly preeminent in eloquence and civil arts,” 10.15.12). Strikingly, this statement attributes to Appius’ peers the view that he is “the best” in a certain area, and furthermore that other aristocrats *should* be willing to compete in this area themselves. Thus, even a Fabius—universally acknowledged as the preeminent military com-

²⁰ Carroll (2002) 12, also 12–19 with further bibliography.

²¹ On Claudian “arrogance,” see above, n. 18 with Wiseman (1979) 86–90. Decius again speaks up for (noble) Plebeian rights at 10.24—supposedly in brief, as befits a man of deeds not words (10.24.4), yet Livy gives his speech a full Oxford page (10.24.8–17). Appius’ opponents, when plebeian, make much of his “anti-plebeian” lineage; cf. 9.34.1–5. Appius’ supposed opposition, here and elsewhere, to plebeian nobles taking up their lawful privileges has been thought inconsistent with his other acts benefiting lower-ranking plebeians, stirring much scholarly debate: Linke (2000) 75–6; Raaflaub, Richards, and Samons (1992) 44–5 with bibliography.

mander of this era (10.3.7, 11.9, 21.15–16), whose *gloria* in this sphere surpasses all others²²—is thought diminished for shirking the implicit challenge to compete in this alternative arena. Fabius' reluctance is the more remarkable in that (as Livy presents him) he is hardly incompetent in domestic politics: his honorific cognomen *Maximus* was supposedly earned for his tribal reforms as censor in 304 (9.46.14–15—in fact, for reversing Appius' reforms of 312), and Livy further declares that, in securing the grain supply as aedile in 298, he measured up to his own military achievements.²³

But if Appius overshadows Fabius in the (domestic) arena he supposedly dominates, how might he do in the (military) arena where Fabius has proven his mastery? Deprived of any command during his first consulship, he now, in his second, suffers further delay: for once again, the previous consuls Fabius and Decius are prorogued in their command in Samnium for six months, leaving the new consuls Appius and Volumnius without commands (10.16.1–2).²⁴ When news arrives of a rising in Etruria, we learn that Volumnius has already departed for Samnium with two legions to join the proconsuls (10.18.3, 8–9), leaving only Appius available to lead an army north. At long last, he has his chance in the field.²⁵ He bungles it. Livy says that he showed little aptitude as commander, joining battle at disadvantageous times and places, causing the enemy to swell with confidence, and ultimately losing confidence in, as well as losing the confidence of, his soldiers

²² Probably historically true, since his iterated magistracies and prorogued commands likely do reflect his perceived military competence: Hölkeskamp (1987) 133, 138 (130–4 in general on iteration).

²³ [*Cura*] *qualis in bellicis rebus multis tempestatibus fuerat, talis domi tum in annonae dispensatione praeparando ac conuehendo frumento fuisset* (“[matters would have been bad] had this man not now taken such pains in planning the administration of the market and procuring grain as he had taken on many previous occasions regarding military matters,” 10.11.9).

²⁴ After narrating the proconsuls' subsequent successes in Samnium (10.16–17), Livy mentions disagreement among his sources about who won these victories: some credit one or the other proconsul, while others credit the consul Volumnius, and still others credit both consuls. For my purposes, what matters is that Livy adopts a version that keeps Appius in Rome and out of battle as long as possible, concordant with his overall presentation of Appius' distinctive specialization and competence.

²⁵ In 10.18 Livy carefully accounts for why Fabius, Decius, and Volumnius are unavailable, and he stresses the urgency of the Etruscan situation; thus he makes clear that the situation must be addressed, and that Appius is the only available bearer of *imperium*. His phrasing at 10.18.3, in fact, implies that Volumnius would have been preferred (as, indeed, he clearly was for the Samnite command, for which he had already departed).

(10.18.5–6). Livy then reports, but refuses to affirm, the assertion in some sources that Appius sent a letter to Volumnius requesting aid (10.18.7): at any rate Volumnius breaks off an already successful campaign in Samnium (10.18.8–9) and brings his army to Etruria, claiming that Appius summoned him (10.18.10–14).

Here begins the third “set-piece” confrontation that Livy has constructed between Appius and his major contemporaries. Appius angrily denies having written for help, and speaks curt words (given in *oratio recta*, as befits one deemed outstanding in *eloquentia*); he accuses his colleague of seeking glory in Etruria at his expense.²⁶ Volumnius’ words, given in *oratio obliqua*, are accommodating, and he prepares to return to Samnium (10.18.14). At this point, the officers of Appius’ army gather around the consuls (*digredientes iam consules legati tribunique ex Appiano exercitu circumstant*, 10.19.1)—the assembling of spectators being Livy’s characteristic device for emphasizing the civic, communal significance of the events unfolding²⁷—exhorting Appius not to spurn his colleague’s help, regardless how it was offered, and begging Volumnius to stay, despite the quarrel, for the good of the *res publica* (10.19.1–4). Under such pressure the consuls are drawn into a highly ritualized performance situation: a full-scale, formal public assembly (*contio*) before Appius’ army, with each consul delivering a speech regarding what should be done. Competing now with words, Appius might be expected to have the advantage; yet Livy says that Volumnius’ verbal performance stood up well against his colleague’s outstanding eloquence, since he had the better cause (*Volumnius, causa superior, ne infacundus quidem aduersus eximiam eloquentiam collegae uisus esset*, 10.19.6). Indeed, Livy *shows* Volumnius outperforming Appius, contrary to expectation: when Appius, offering grudging praise for his colleague’s speech, jeers that Volumnius should thank him for his unexpected fluency, as he was now a popular orator when he had hardly dared speak during their previous consulship, Volumnius “caps” him by replying, *quam mallet... tu a me strenue facere quam ego abs te scite loqui didicissem* (“would that you had learned from me

²⁶ Anger: *haud immerito iratum si nihil scripserat, inliberali et ingrato animo, si egerat ope, dissimulantem* (“quite reasonably angered if he had not written, but dissembling with an ungenerous and ungrateful heart if he had needed assistance,” 10.18.10). Accusation: *etenim minime consentaneum est, cum bello tuo forsitan uix sufficias, huc te ad opem ferendam aliis gloriari uenisse* (“Indeed it is completely inappropriate that, when you may scarcely be equal to your own war, you boast that you have come bearing assistance to others,” 10.18.13).

²⁷ Feldherr (1998) in general, though he does not specifically discuss the spectacular dynamics of oratory.

to act forcefully, than that I had learned from you to speak cleverly,” 10.19.8)—here with Appius’ words in *oratio obliqua* and Volumnius’ in *oratio recta*, as befits this inversion of the expected order.²⁸ Yet, having shown that he can speak effectively if the situation requires, this man of action does not neglect the main point: he concludes by remarking that the current issue is not to decide who is the better orator, but who the better general.²⁹

Appius is clearly worsted in this encounter, as earlier by Decius (10.7–9): paradoxically, Livy never gives his acknowledged master of *eloquentia* an extended speech or any clear rhetorical success.³⁰ Nevertheless, Livy here validates the arena of aristocratic competition that he presents Appius as trailblazing. For Volumnius’ triumphant *sententia*, privileging forceful action (*strenue facere*) over clever speaking (*scite loqui*), implicitly concedes that—somewhere, sometime—the latter does have its uses. Moreover, the apparently sharp distinction Volumnius draws between these skills is undermined precisely by the cleverness of the *sententia* by which he articulates that distinction. Indeed, Volumnius himself sets a new competitive standard to challenge Appius. For the competition Livy creates here is not, *pace* Volumnius, over who is the better general or orator, but who is better in his off-field. Already a fine general, Volumnius has now shown he can rise to the occasion in speaking (perhaps thanks to Appius’ own example)—the very challenge Fabius was earlier accused of shirking (10.15.12). But can Appius, for his part, yet make a passable showing in generalship? We soon find out, for the soldiers, with an outcry, persuade Volumnius and his army to remain. Volumnius orders his soldiers to advance into battle and Appius is forced to do likewise, though fearing that Volumnius has stolen his show (*cernentem seu pugnante seu quieto se fore collegae uictoriam*, 10.19.13). Once battle is joined, however, Appius devises a stratagem by which to recover his share of glory; Livy writes:

²⁸ Cf. Cass. Dio 8.27. Oakley (1997) 4.219 observes that Appius’ expression *acceptum referre* is a metaphor from banking—another element, perhaps, of his characterization as a man of the forum.

²⁹ The *topos* that aristocrats compete in words as well as deeds is as old as Homer. For its Roman manifestation—defining the proper time and place for generals vis-à-vis orators—see, e.g., Cic. *Mur.* 30 (quoting Ennius); Harris (1979) 22–3.

³⁰ Also at 9.34 the tribune Sempronius speaks at length against Appius continuing as censor; Appius justifies himself only with a legal niggles given in *oratio obliqua* (9.32.8–9). He persuades three tribunes, thanks to whose veto he remains in office (9.34.26), but apparently persuades no one else (9.34.26; cf. 9.33.5).

dicatur Appius in medio pugnae discrimine, ita ut inter prima signa manibus ad caelum sublatis conspiceretur, ita precatus esse: “Bellona, si hodie nobis uictoriam duis, ast ego tibi templum uoueo.” haec precatus uelut instigante dea et ipse collegae et exercitus uirtutem aequauit ducis.

(Liv. 10.19.17–18)

It is said that Appius, at precisely the critical point of the battle, so that he might be seen among the standards in the forefront with his arms raised heavenwards, prayed as follows: “Bellona, if today you grant us victory, then I vow you a temple.” With this prayer, as though spurred on by the goddess, he matched his colleague’s valor and his army matched its general’s.

Significantly, Livy makes Appius stand in the forefront—the proper place for a courageous general rallying his troops—where everyone sees him making the vow (and again, the reference to the spectators imbues the action with civic significance, conferring weight and legitimacy upon it). And given that war-fighting is not his specialty, it makes sense that he calls upon a war-goddess for help. Thus does he “equal” (*aequauit*) his colleague in battle,³¹ just as his colleague equaled him in the *contio*. Finally, the temple he vows, presumably to be dedicated from the spoils of this victory,³² will itself attest (rightly or wrongly) his military glory. So even if, as Appius fears, this specific victory redounds more to Volumnius’ credit, by this dedication he will monumentalize himself as a war-fighter, complementing the road and aqueduct that monumentalize his prowess in *artes urbanae*. In the long run, it works: the temple of Bellona became the venue for senatorial deliberations over granting triumphs.³³ Thus, ironically, unwarlike Appius came to preside over all subsequent decisions regarding the supreme military honor the *res publica* could bestow—an honor that he himself never gained.

Despite the consuls’ strife, Livy makes Volumnius into a conciliator who understands and articulates what his prickly colleague is good for. Volumnius is recalled to Rome to conduct elections, with the threats

³¹ Massa-Pairault (2001) 103–4 suggests that Bellona may be especially associated with this particular enemy, making Appius’ vow an *euocatio* such as Camillus employed with Veian Juno (Livy 5.22.3–7). But whether Livy or his readers would have interpreted the vow this way is uncertain.

³² Though Livy does not say any booty was reserved: *castra capta direptaque; praeda ingens parta et militi concessa est* (“the camp was taken and pillaged; vast booty was procured and given over to the soldiers,” 10.19.22).

³³ Temple: Viscogliosi, *LTUR* (1993) 1.190–2. Triumph debates occurring there: Livy 26.21.1, 28.9.5, 28.38.2, 31.47.6, etc.

in Etruria growing greater (emphasized by Appius' dispatches, which Volumnius corroborates: 10.21.11–15). Perhaps now feeling his oats as a public speaker, Volumnius addresses the assembled voters. He describes the military situation, and eventually endorses a particular slate of candidates:

Decium Fabiumque qui uno animo, una mente uiuerent esse praeterea uiros natos militiae, factis magnos, ad uerborum linguaeque certamina rudes. ea ingenia consularia esse: callidos sollertesque, iuris atque eloquentiae consultos, qualis Ap. Claudius esset, urbi ac foro praesides habendos praetoresque ad reddenda iura creandos esse.

(Liv. 10.22.6–8)

Decius and Fabius, who lived as with one heart and one mind, were moreover men born for campaigning: great in their deeds, they were inexperienced in contests of words and tongue. Theirs were consular dispositions. But men who were clever and resourceful, practiced in law and eloquence, such as Appius Claudius was, should be regarded as custodians of the city and forum, and should be elected praetors to administer justice.

Thus, in this most formalized and institutionalized of settings, namely an assembly of the *populus* prior to the vote of the *comitia centuriata*, Volumnius publicly defines the competitive arena appropriate to Appius' distinctive abilities—where *scite loqui*, as he put it earlier, has its time and place. Once again demonstrating his own passing competence as an orator, his words here are persuasive: the *comitia* duly return Fabius and Decius as consuls, along with Appius as praetor; Volumnius' own *imperium* is prorogued (10.22.8–9).

Two further encounters with contemporaries underscore the characterization that has emerged so far. Appius, alone again in his Etruscan command, had been sending alarmed dispatches to the Senate (10.21.11–12), and in terror had surrounded his camp with a double stockade and trench. Fabius, arriving as consul to relieve him, orders the soldiers to tear up the stockade—removing their protection but nevertheless dispelling their fear, such is their confidence in Fabius' generalship (10.25.5–10). Appius returns to Rome to assume his praetorship and (presumably) “preside over city and forum,” as Volumnius put it. After Decius' *deuotio* at the battle of Sentinum, however, the praetor is pressed back into military service, since Decius' army in Samnium lacks a commander. Appius quickly joins forces with Volumnius, who is still in Samnium as proconsul, and the two win a battle together (10.31.3–7). These episodes seem to recapitulate aspects

of the encounter with Volumnius in Etruria: Appius again does poorly as sole commander, requiring rescue by a better general. But he does passably when collaborating closely with a better general (in the event, always Volumnius).

To summarize, Livy's Appius in books 9–10 is a “lively” figure insofar as he is stubborn and abrasive—personal characteristics, however, that reflect his structural function in the narrative as an innovator who changes the rules of contemporary aristocratic competition. The “virtue wheel” allows Livy's reader to see exactly what Appius changes, and how. A surfeit of fine generals (Fabius, Decius, Volumnius) keeps him long shut out of a military command, the premier arena of aristocratic competition. Reduced to engaging in urban pursuits, Appius innovatively decides to seek power and glory from them. In time, his contemporaries concede his mastery in eloquence and jurisprudence—but they also undertake to compete with him in these areas, thereby establishing and legitimating *urbanae artes* as a field of aristocratic competition. Yet Appius cannot completely neglect the battlefield: he makes a creditable showing in Volumnius' domain of excellence, as Volumnius does in Appius'. The virtue wheel also characterizes Appius' other main contemporaries. Fabius, the unrivalled master of the battlefield, twice overshadows Appius in the military sphere, but is mocked for avoiding competition with Appius in civil arts. Decius, another fine general and purportedly man of few words (10.24.4), emerges as a voluble spokesman for the rights of plebeian nobles: he speaks first against Appius regarding the *lex Ogulnia* and wins his point, while later, speaking against Fabius on the allocation of provinces, he loses it.

Why should Livy construct such a complex, transgressive, innovative figure? What does this Appius do for Livy? One way to approach this question is to consider the rather different version of Appius that Augustus placed in the gallery of *summi uiri* in his Forum. Here, each hero had a statue accompanied by two inscriptions: one, on the statue's base, gave the commemorand's name and offices held; the second and larger, on a plaque below the niche in which the statue stood, specified his military victories and other items deemed noteworthy (including, sometimes, achievements in the domestic as well as in the military spheres). For Appius, these two inscriptions ran as follows:

Appius Claudius C. f. Caecus. censor, cos bis, dict, interrex III, pr II, aed cur II, q, tr mil III.

(Degrassi [1937] no. 79)

Appius Claudius Caecus, son of Gaius. Censor, consul twice, dictator, interrex three times, praetor twice, curule aedile twice, quaestor, military tribune three times.

complura oppida de Samnitibus cepit, Sabinorum et Tuscorum exercitum fudit. pacem fieri cum Pyrrho rege prohibuit. in censura uiam Appiam strauit et aquam in urbem adduxit. aedem Bellonae fecit.

(Degrassi [1937] nos. 12, 79)

He took a number of towns from the Samnites and routed an army of Sabines and Etruscans. He prevented peace being made with king Pyrrhus. In his censorship he laid the Appian way and brought an aqueduct into the city. He dedicated the temple of Bellona.

Scholars have noted that the formulaic character of the *elogia* from the Forum Augustum tends to cast all memorandums into the same mold: one that, above all, emphasizes and valorizes military achievement. Here Appius is credited with victories that can be correlated (somewhat awkwardly) with battles described in Livy, and viewers would probably have assumed that the temple was vowed in battle and paid for from Appius' share of the booty, though the inscription (like Livy) is silent on this.³⁴ Also, the "full" listing of offices, including junior ones like the military tribunate, both in this and other *elogia*, reminds the reader that young Republican aristocrats routinely apprenticed in the art of war, the most important single subject of their secondary education at least until the late second century BCE.³⁵ Augustus' Appius, then, like other figures in the gallery, is a respectable military hero with some noteworthy public works also to his credit. It is hard to recognize here the restless innovator and master of *artes urbanae* seen in Livy's narrative;

³⁴ Victories: Münzer (*RE* 3.2684) believes *complura oppida de Samnitibus cepit* refers to the campaigns of 296: Livy says Fabius and Decius took three *oppida* (10.16–17), but notes an alternative version (10.17.11–12) in which the consuls win these victories—arguably reconcilable with the *elogium*. Conversely, Massa-Pairault (2001) 99–101 takes the phrase as referring to the campaigns of 295 that Livy attributes to Appius as praetor and Volumnius as proconsul (10.31), though Livy mentions no *oppida* taken. For the Etruscans and Sabines of the *elogium*—where Livy has Etruscans and Samnites (10.18–20)—see Massa-Pairault (2001) 102–4; on the possible confusion of Sabines with Samnites, in this *elogium* and elsewhere, see Oakley (1997) 4.30–4. Temple-vowing: the *elogium* for Marius (Degrassi (1939) nos. 17, 83) specifies that he dedicated the temple to Honos and Virtus *de manibus*; perhaps also Postumius Regillensis (Degrassi [1937] no. 10).

³⁵ Young aristocrats' training in warfare: Harris (1979) 10–15. Appius' likely military experience as a young man: Ferenczy (1965) 392–3. Other *elogia* from the Forum Augustum mentioning military tribunates: Degrassi (1937) nos. 6, 7, 15, 17/83, 80, 81, 84; cf. 19.

likewise, the minimal military competence of Livy's Appius—the seeming novice who first takes the field only in his second consulship, and whose generalship is inept without expert guidance—is hard to recognize in the *elogium*'s standard-issue military victor who in his youth served no less than three times as military tribune.

How might we account for Augustus' version of Appius? Scholars, taking their cue from Suetonius (*Aug.* 31.5), have plausibly argued that the gallery of *summi uiri* furnished a set of exemplary figures, and canons of achievement, for future aristocrats to emulate and for Augustus to present himself as having surpassed.³⁶ Yet what standard Appius sets is not altogether clear from the *elogium*. In his military achievements, even as presented here, he does not surpass other memoranda who have numerous victories and triumphs. Perhaps, instead, his censorship and its great public works are deemed exemplary: he is among the two most famous censors (with Cato the elder), and Augustus makes much of his own censorial activities (*RG* 8). Likewise, the temple to the war goddess Bellona should perhaps recall the temple of the war god Mars Ultor that looms over this gallery, itself dedicated by Augustus *ex manubiis*, and perhaps more generally recalls the 82 temples Augustus claims to have restored (*RG* 21). Yet it seems perverse to argue that achievements listed *after* his military victories are what “really” matter: the point of the formulaic structure listing victories first must be to insist that impeccable military credentials are the *sine qua non* of inclusion in the gallery; that this is the arena, above all others, in which exemplary aristocrats must have competed effectively.³⁷

³⁶ Frisch (1980) discusses Augustus' probable oversight of the *elogia*, and the respects in which he surpassed these figures; also Luce (1990) 125–9. Central texts: Suet. *Aug.* 31.5; Cass. Dio 55.10.

³⁷ Anderson's suggestions (1984) 84–5 regarding Appius' relevance for Augustus are not persuasive. The *elogia* have been thought to emphasize the arts of peace (Kellum [1981] 116–124 cited in Chaplin [2001] 179–80), modeling achievement in non-military venues—a new mode of heroism for a new era. But the enumeration of military achievements first seems to give them ideological primacy, and accords with the martial program of the whole Forum Augustum-Mars Ultor complex. Surviving fragments of the statues prove some were togate and others armored. But togas need not imply the arts of peace (Rinaldi Tufi [1981] 84) since they may have been painted to represent the triumphator's *toga picta* (cf. Suet. *Aug.* 31.5: *statuas... triumphali effigie... dedicauit*—though two known memoranda, L. Albinus and Appius himself, were not *triumphatores*). Chaplin's ([2001] 184–92) observation that some *elogia* stress rewards for military achievement other than or ancillary to the traditional triumph is attractive. However, this observation does not directly illuminate Appius' *elogium*.

Livy's version, in contrast—deemphasizing Appius' military capabilities and activities—tallies with his efforts to present Appius as an innovator on other fronts, and differentiates him the more sharply from contemporaries whose “conventional” strengths and weaknesses are the opposite of his own. Moreover, Livy famously declares in his preface that the social benefits of reading history reside in encountering every kind of example, from which one must choose what to imitate and what to avoid (*praef.* 10); he further asks his reader to contemplate *quae uita, qui mores fuerint, per quos uiros quibusque artibus domi militiaeque et partum et auctum imperium sit* (“what the life and customs were, through what men and by what skills, at home and at war, the empire was begotten and grew large,” *praef.* 9). Thus, as scholars have recognized, Livy self-consciously participates in a discourse of exemplarity in which Augustus and most other contemporary Romans also engage.³⁸ Can Livy's innovative Appius be seen as providing a model for his (presumably elite) readers to imitate or avoid, and/or as demonstrating any of the *artes* through which the city grew great?

Certainly Appius is not the only figure in the extant portions of Livy who reorients received modes of aristocratic competition: he finds an imitator (though is not cited as a model) in Q. Fabius Maximus Cunctator. Like Appius, Fabius is forced to innovate by circumstances beyond his control. Traditionally, hand-to-hand fighting in pitched battles was thought to secure the good of the *res publica*, and was rewarded by the ascription of positive values like *uirtus* and *gloria*: a tight nexus of value-oriented actions and action-oriented values. Early in the second Punic war, however, Hannibal's superiority in fighting pitched battles drives a wedge into this nexus, creating a military and ethical crisis simultaneously. For now, fighting pitched battles endangers rather than secures the *res publica*; the means and the end no longer form a seamless whole that can be valued as one. To which, then, do these values attach? To the means, such that valor and glory inhere in fighting traditional pitched battles and facing death bravely, even if the army is annihilated and the commonwealth put in mortal danger (Trebiana, Trasimene, Cannae)? Or to the end of protecting the commonwealth, here requiring that the army be kept intact and therefore

³⁸ On the operation of exempla in Livy's text and Augustus' forum, see Chaplin (2001) 168–96 (*et passim* on Livy); on Roman exemplarity more generally see Roller (2004) 1–10.

avoiding pitched battles? Fabius' challenge in book 22 is to advocate the latter view: to remake military *gloria* as a strategic rather than tactical value, bucking many contemporaries who reflexively embrace the former view. Eventually Fabius carries the day, thereby reconfiguring an existing arena of aristocratic competition—the most important arena, in fact: that of war-fighting—whereas Appius innovated by creating an entirely new arena alongside war-fighting. The traces of Fabius' success are visible in the (apparent) paradox that he gained *gloria* (of the “state-preserving” sort) precisely by having foregone *gloria* (of the “bravery in combat” sort).³⁹ Beyond both Appius and Fabius Cunctator, Livy provides still further instances of figures who, under particular circumstances, receive greater acclaim by foregoing the standard, institutionalized modes of recognition (e.g., by declining a deserved triumph) than they would have received from being recognized in the standard way (e.g., 2.47.11, 3.21.7, 4.20.1–3, 7.38.3, 9.40.20–1, 24.9.11, 28.9.10–15). Indeed, early in book 4, the plebeian tribune Canuleius delivers a speech arguing that innovation itself is entirely traditional (4.4.1–5).

While hardly preoccupied with innovation and innovators, then, Livy shows a persistent interest in new and unusual ways for aristocrats to win glory and in changes to the arenas in which aristocrats compete. Here, I suggest, is an aspect of his contemporary “political” engagement (in the broader sense). The civil war years and preceding decade or two—the era in which Livy and Augustus came of age—featured aristocratic competition run amok. Prominent aristocrats sought prestige and status by holding traditional magistracies for ever longer or more frequent terms, by receiving ever more exceptional appointments, by conducting increasingly grandiose (and multiple) triumphs, by sponsoring ever more spectacular games, and ultimately by displaying their military prowess against one another as well as against “external” enemies. The bleeding of the aristocracy during the civil wars eliminated or sharply reduced some of the traditionally most competitive families. With the end of armed conflict after Actium, there began a

³⁹ Passages in book 22 exploring this crisis in values: 22.12.12, 22.14.4–15.2, 22.25.14–15, 22.39.8–22, 22.44.5–7. Fabius' stance is described similarly elsewhere: e.g., Plut. *Fab.* 4, 14, 17; Enn. *Ann.* frags. 363–5 Skutsch (1985). The *elogium* for Fabius in the Forum Augustum, meanwhile, presents a fairly unexceptional military hero, whose radical strategy of non-engagement is hinted at only in the phrases *Hannibalem . . . subsequendo coarctuit* and (perhaps) *dux aetatis suae cautissimus* (Degraffi [1937] no. 80). See Beck (2000) 79, 90, with further references at 384.

slow process of reconstructing the aristocracy, and of recreating stable, regulated (if not self-regulating) competitive modes. Even during the 20s BCE, when Livy probably completed his first decade and wrote the second and third, Octavian/Augustus was establishing himself not only as superior beyond competition in the traditional competitive arenas (triumphs, consulships...), but also as an umpire in the competition among other aristocrats. He took personal control of some aspects of traditional competition by (for instance) holding the consulship himself every year from 31–23 BCE, and—after 27—personally designating legates to military commands within his vast *prouincia*. He also determined in other cases what was “out of bounds”: he disallowed Licinius Crassus’ attempt to dedicate the *spolia opima*, the event behind the famous Livian passage regarding Augustus and the corselet of Cossus (4.20.5–11); and he reined in Cornelius Gallus for what he apparently deemed excessive self-aggrandizement as prefect of Egypt.⁴⁰ During the teens BCE, when Livy must have completed the remaining books that now that now survive (and more), further patterns may have been emerging, such as the restriction of full-scale triumphs, and also of the right to dedicate large-scale public works within Rome, to Augustus’ own family. Indeed, Agrippa declined triumphs in 19 and 14, and even Tiberius supposedly refrained from celebrating every triumph he earned in this period, thereby winning praise for his moderation in some quarters.⁴¹ But new competitive venues emerged as older ones withered: now aristocrats strove for Augustus’ commendation for office-holding; military success could still gain *ornamenta triumphalia* and, eventually, a pedestrian statue in the Forum Augustum; and while public oratory in the senate, law courts, and popular assemblies declined in competitive significance, this oratorical impulse was diverted into other arenas of verbal display, such as *recitatio* and declamation, whose competitive importance correspondingly increased.⁴² In this political environment (in the broad sense of how power is distributed in society), Livy’s interest in how, why, and by whom competitive arenas get established and reconfigured seems fitting, even inevitable. Augustus shared this interest, as his interventions

⁴⁰ Eck (1984) 131. For the pace of Livy’s writing see Oakley (1997) 1.109–10.

⁴¹ Eck (1984) 138–42. Agrippa’s declined triumphs: Cass. Dio 54.11.6, 54.24.7–8. Praise for Tiberius’ moderation: Vell. Pat. 2.122.1–2. Gaining glory from foregoing a triumph, then, is not simply an antiquarian curiosity in Livy’s text, but a key device in the Augustan-era reconfiguration of the economy of military prestige.

⁴² Roller (1998) 266 n. 4 for further references.

in various competitive arenas show; however, every aristocrat of the Augustan age was involved, consciously or unconsciously, in the project of reconstructing the rules and venues of aristocratic competition. At least in this respect, Livy's history is "political" not in the sense of being "for" or "against" Augustus, but in the sense that Livy, Augustus, and their elite contemporaries were collectively immersed in a world characterized by novel problems, constraints, and possibilities, where all parties were feeling their way forward as if in the dark. For Livy, history provides a laboratory in which the contemporary crisis in aristocratic competition can be thought out and possible solutions can be "tried on."

Finally, these constraints and possibilities may have conditioned Livy's own self-positioning as an aristocrat in Augustan Rome. While nothing is known of his family in Patavium, the elite rhetorical education he manifestly received, and his apparent lack of patronage in Rome—implying that his own resources sufficed to support his literary career—may suggest he was a scion of the municipal aristocracy (a *domi nobilis*) who came to the metropolis to make his name. Had he been born one or two generations earlier, perhaps he would have competed in the arena of oratory, as Cicero, himself with such a background, so successfully did. But as *oratio* was displaced from the courts, senate, and assemblies into other arenas, its practitioners followed. Scholars have noted that Livy was among the first Roman historiographers who was not himself a Roman senator or at least of senatorial family, and Livy may allude to his own innovativeness in this respect in his preface.⁴³ If indeed he innovated by entering the field of historiography despite his family background, perhaps it was the shifting arenas of contemporary aristocratic competition that made this choice possible and desirable. All the more reason, then, for his engagement with such matters in his history.⁴⁴

⁴³ *Et si in tanta scriptorum turba mea fama in obscuro sit, nobilitate ac magnitudine eorum me qui nomini officient meo consoler* ("and should my reputation be overshadowed in so great a throng of writers, I would console myself by the high birth and splendor of those who eclipse my name," *praef.* 3:). Here *nobilitas* and *magnitudo* carry status connotations. Livy's social position: Kraus (1994) 1–5; Miles (1995) 47–54. "Senatorial" historians: Wiseman (1987) 244–52. Livy did achieve *gloria* in his lifetime (*Sen. Cont.* 10 *praef.* 2; *Plin. HN praef.* 16; *Plin. Ep.* 2.3.8) and after (e.g., *Tac. Ann.* 4.34.3; *Suda s.v. Kornoutos*).

⁴⁴ I thank Tom Habinek, Mary Jaeger, and Chris Kraus for valuable comments and corrections.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE POLITICS OF ELEGY: PROPERTIUS AND TIBULLUS

Marcus Wilson

The reader of current scholarship on Roman elegy cannot but be struck by a stark inconsistency between two modes of reading (often employed simultaneously), one applied to the erotic relationships articulated in the poems, the other applied to the political relationships. In the case of the former, there is a general acceptance of the principle that the representation of the poet's relationship with his lover is far from being a direct reflection of real life, that it is reshaped according to generic conventions, is (to some degree) fictionalized, and that the mistress portrayed is a *scripta puella*, a literary creation.¹ By contrast, the poets' relationships with patrons and ultimately with the emperor are treated almost universally as indicative of historical realities of the social, economic, and political hierarchy under Augustus, and enormous effort has been put into identifying precisely the poets' male addressees and charting the convergence (or divergence) of the themes of the poems with Augustan political ideology.²

These discordant ways of thinking about the poetry of Propertius and Tibullus may satisfy some historians who take seriously only the political or power relations evident in the poems and feel they can disregard as trivial or conventional the expression in the same texts of personal emotions and amatory desires. Yet, for those concerned to understand the poetry in its fullness as poetry, this critical situation is deeply unsatisfying. There is, of course, no close parallel between the function of this poetry with that of Augustan visual art which, being public (since most of that which survives is public in its original

¹ Veyne (1988); Wyke (1987) 47–61; Kennedy (1993); McNamee (1993) 215–48; Lee-Stecum (1998) 304–9; Greene (1998) 37–66; James (1998); Wyke (2002); James (2003) 21–6; Ancona and Greene (2005) 1–9.

² Hence the ongoing conflict between pro-Augustan and anti-Augustan readings of elegy. This dichotomy is rejected by Kennedy (1992) 26–58 and Kennedy (1993) 35–8, but for a systematic critique of his position, see Davis (2006) 9–22. See also Miller (2004) 30. Prominent among recent readings that reiterate the case of the pro-Augustan interpretation are Galinsky (1996); Newman (1997); Cairns (2006).

presentation and imperial in theme), conveys an officially sanctioned perspective on Augustus' principate.³ Elegiac poetry is a poetry of markedly different individuals, each with a different take on the world and, in particular, the Roman world. Private life provides the context for most of the poems, such that public and political themes struggle to compete with it, and that struggle is itself thematized by the elegists, who regard the political from the point of view of outsiders already committed to unconventional, or as some might have put it, un-Roman, values. Whether measured in number of poems or number of lines, the relationships of Propertius with Cynthia or Tibullus with his lovers outweigh many times over the former's relationship with Maecenas and the latter's with Messalla as poetic subjects. Each poet is deprived of coherence, split into two, made to be one sort of writer when dealing with love and another sort of writer when dealing with his relations with his male associates. Some poems are to be regarded as arising directly from the poet's personal poetic preoccupations whereas others are more or less commissioned work,⁴ in which the poet is a craftsman putting into verse ideas that are suggested if not imposed by a patron. Delia, Nemesis, and Cynthia, we are required to believe, are characters in a drama⁵ whereas Tullus, Gallus, Maecenas, Messalla, and Macer are outside the play and belong to history. No doubt some readers will respond by saying, "Yes. That's just the way it is. There are two types of relationships in the poetry, one fanciful, the other real." Such a response, though, betrays a lack of awareness of how the two ways of reading depend at least as much on competing modern critical assumptions and methodologies as on the evidence of the actual poems. The approach to the love relationships has been shaped by decades of theorizing about the nature of literary invention and the transformative

³ As explored by Zanker (1998). Davis (2006) 23–4 astutely observes that "Augustan ideology is most clearly and unambiguously expressed not in works of literature, but in the visual arts, in building, sculptural and numismatic programmes, for example, and in cultural events promoted and approved by the regime." See also White (1993) 120–58. A case can be made that the poets sometimes set out to challenge through their poetry the ideological meaning imposed by the *princeps* upon the visual urban space of Rome. See, for instance, Rothwell (1986) 829–54; Fantham (1997) 12–35; Welch (2005) 296–317.

⁴ Cairns (2006) 347 refers to a number of Propertian poems as "commissioned," e.g., 2.31, 3.4, 3.18, 4.11. Similarly Hubbard (1974) 100 wrote of Propertius producing "poems to order."

⁵ Warden (1980) 86: "Each poem is a little drama." For the relation to new comedy see James (1998) 1–16 and James (2003) 21–5.

effect of literary artistry, by the now orthodox rejection of biographical interpretation, by the feminist critique of male constructions of the female.⁶ Behind the more fundamentalist approach to the political relationships is the current vogue for historicism and explication of imperial ideology in every imaginable corner of Roman culture, not to speak of the lingering influence of Syme's *Roman Revolution*.⁷ The incoherence in our understanding of how elegy works stems, it seems to me, not from elegy but from our own incompatible ways of reading it. To neither Tibullus nor Propertius was the poetry that addressed his patron inconsistent in mode or attitude with the poetry addressed to his mistress, or such, at least, is the position maintained in this chapter. Both modern ways of reading, in addition to their mutual incompatibility, gravitate to the extreme: in that the one, in emphasizing the literary artifice behind the love relationships, tends to occlude the strength of human passion hidden beneath the conventional forms; and in that the other, in emphasizing the pressures brought to bear on poets by their position in the Roman social and political hierarchy, fails to acknowledge the degree to which that hierarchy is made to serve poetic ends and is a creation of the poets themselves. Since this book is about the representation of the political in literature, I will restrict myself here to combating the second of these sources of distortion.

Horace in his *Ars Poetica* distinguished the main literary genres practiced in his day. First comes epic which has as its subject *res gestae regumque ducumque et tristia bella* ("the activities of kings and leaders and grim warfare," 73). The second genre he describes is elegy, alluding to its origins in commemorations of the dead and votive inscriptions:

uersibus impariter iunctis querimonia primum,
post etiam inclusa est uoti sententia compos.

(Hor. *Ars* 75–6)

Protestation was the original theme of verses of unequal length;
Included later were thoughts on fulfillment of one's prayer.⁸

While Horace's definitions of the quintessential subjects of these genres cannot be taken as restrictions on their later development, they do give some idea of the ruling assumptions during the Augustan era about

⁶ Wyke (1987) 47–61; Kennedy (1993) 37–45; Greene (1998) xii–xiv; Wyke (2002).

⁷ Syme (1939), esp. 459–75, and the crude literary judgments of his chapter entitled "The Organisation of Opinion".

⁸ All translations are by the author.

their character and appropriate content; and he does go on to warn that any mismatching of the verse forms and their proper themes as he has described them will disqualify a writer from the title of poet (86–7). Neither of these genres is said to have panegyric as one of its principal tasks, but it is easy to see that a genre devoted to warfare and the *res gestae* of leaders might be adapted to that end. Epic dealt with public and historically significant events. Elegy, on the other hand, would seem to offer little opportunity for the expression of a positive political message. Its primary modality is the articulation of unhappiness and unfulfillment (*querimonia*, 75). No reader of Propertius and Tibullus would deny that unhappiness and unfulfilled wishes drive their elegiac *personae*. While there might be some scope for a positive political message in the guise of *voti sententia compos* (“fulfillment of one’s prayer”), it will be limited by the fact that the genre, at least according to Horace’s dictate, seems to permit the celebrating of an event only in terms of subjective desires. In the same way that the feelings of the lover construct the image of the life of the beloved, so also it is the personal emotional response of the poet that will configure a political or military event, should allusion be made to it in the text. The elegist’s response cannot be presented as a national response without stepping outside the traditional confines of the genre. It is significant that the only direct laudation of a political figure in the Propertian and Tibullan corpus, namely the *Panegyricus Messallae* (Tib. 3.7)⁹ is also the only poem not in the elegiac meter. There could hardly be a less suitable vehicle for Augustan or any other “propaganda” than elegy, a literary form which has as its first function the passionate articulation of discontent (*querimonia*).

The elegists take advantage of this natural incompatibility between their genre and public life, appropriating the military and political activities of their addressees into the elegiac world view, making of them an incompatible “other” continually evoked in order to be continually rejected as a means of validating and strengthening the poet’s commitment to poetry and love:

te bellare decet terra, Messalla, marique,
ut domus hostiles praeferat exuuias:

⁹ Not, of course, written by Tibullus.

me retinent uinctum formosae uincla puellae,
et sedeo duras ianitor ante fores.

(Tib. 1.1.53–6)

For you Messalla it's appropriate to wage war on land and sea
so your house can display enemy spoils:
the chains of a beautiful girl hold me fast
and I sit like a door keeper at her threshold.

In fact, public and political figures are important to the elegists but on their own terms, as devices for eliciting from the poets constant renewals of their commitment to their unconventional lives, as prisoners unwilling to escape from imprisonment in their own desires. The genre requires an ideological norm against which to define and measure itself, and through that process it regenerates. It draws energy from the need of self-justification. When this self-justification takes an ethical position, inevitably it impugns the ethical position of the rest of Roman society and its leaders:

qualem si cuncti cuperent decurrere vitam
et pressi multo membra iacere mero,
non ferrum crudele neque esset bellica navis,
nec nostra Actiacum verteret ossa mare,
nec totiens propriis circum oppugnata triumphis
lassa foret crines solvere Roma suos.
haec certe merito poterunt laudare minores:
laeserunt nullos proelia nostra deos.

(Prop. 2.15.41–8)¹⁰

If only everyone were willing to lead my life
lying in bed half intoxicated,
the cruel sword and ship of war would be things of the past,
nor would the waves by Actium turn over our bones,
nor would Rome be weary of loosening her hair in grief,
besieged so often by triumphs over herself.
This at least my descendants will be able to applaud:
that none of my battles caused outrage to the gods.

No less important to the maintenance of the elegiac poet's identity is the constant presence of other genres, the temptation or pressure to write himself out of elegy by adopting another literary form or to betray and destroy elegy itself by abandoning *querimonia* ("protestation") for epic narrative or panegyric. It is a constitutive motif of the genre to be toying with its abandonment, only to pull back at the last minute

¹⁰ For more on this poem, see Stahl (1985) 215–33; Gurval (1998) 180–2.

(as for instance in Tib. 2.6.7–18; Prop. 2.1.27–46; Ov. *Am.* 3.1). The borders of the genre are represented as being under continual threat but are preserved in the nick of time. Elegy thrives on its own fragility. As a genre it needs a more powerful outside world to which it never finally succumbs. The eluding of propagandist expectations is more than a sophisticated literary game; it is part and parcel of the elegist's technique of self-fashioning. His best intentions to please his patron, his emperor, are always compromised by his fatal inability to avoid recidivism into elegiac weakness. Elegy imports then marginalizes the political. Over and over again.

This self-conscious and theatricalized ritual of boundary re-assertion can be observed in action throughout the elegiac collections of both Tibullus and Propertius. Of the two, it is Tibullus who foregrounds this elegiac theme of the contrast of chosen lifestyles the more conspicuously in his opening verses:

diuitias alius fuluo sibi congerat auro
 et teneat culti iugera multa soli,
 quem labor adsiduus uicino terreat hoste,
 martia cui somnos classica pulsa fugent:
 me mea paupertas uita traducat inerti,
 dum meus adsiduo luceat igne focus.

(Tib. 1.1.1–6)

Let other people pile up wealth and yellow gold
 and possess large holdings of well-tilled land
 and live in constant fear of the enemy close by,
 their sleep shattered by trumpet blasts.
 Leave to me my moderate means, my quiet life
 and my hearth glowing reliably with fire.

The rest of the poem gives a warm account of his imagined retired rural lifestyle with Delia. At lines 53–8 (quoted above) the contrast becomes specifically one between the poet and Messalla, who is preoccupied with his military campaigning (*te bellare decet*, “for you it’s appropriate to wage war,” Tib. 1.1.53); and the poem closes with a reiteration of the opening rejection of conventional Roman ambitions for military renown or the increase of wealth:

uos, signa tubaeque,
 ite procul, cupidis uulnera ferte uiris,
 ferte et opes: ego composito securus aceruo
 dites despiciam despiciamque famem.

(Tib. 1.1.75–8)

Away with you, standards and trumpets.
 Take your injuries to avid men and give them riches.
 Undisturbed and sufficiently supplied,
 I'll scorn both wealth and indigence.

Two poems later, in 1.3, a second drama of incompatibility is played out, where the ethical and psychological differentiation between Tibullus and Messalla is given concrete expression by emphasis on their physical distance: *ibitis...sine me, Messalla* ("you will go without me, Messalla," 1.3.1), the poem begins. The poet has tried to accompany Messalla on a journey away from Rome and away from his mistress, but he cannot achieve this separation for he becomes sick and begins to die. His attempts to depart are thwarted by omens of divine displeasure:

aut ego sum causatus aues aut omina dira
 Saturniue sacram me tenuisse diem.
 o quotiens ingressus iter mihi tristia dixi
 offensum in porta signa dedisse pedem!
 audeat inuito ne quis discedere Amore,
 aut sciet egressum se prohibente deo.
 (Tib. 1.3.17–22)

I found excuse in birds and other such forebodings
 or I was detained by Saturn's unpropitious day.
 Often in starting out I found a gloomy sign when my foot
 tripped in passing through the gate.
 Let no one dare depart against Love's wishes,
 or he will learn his leaving is offensive to the god.

He writes a funeral lament for himself, including an epitaph to be inscribed on his tomb:¹¹

HIC IACET IMMITI CONSUMPTVS MORTE TIBVLLVS,
 MESSALLAM TERRA DVM SEQVITVRQVE MARI.
 (Tib. 1.3.55–6)
 HERE LIES TIBULLUS TAKEN BY IMPLACABLE DEATH
 WHILE FOLLOWING MESSALLA OVER LAND AND SEA.

This poem makes the same point about the elegist as was made in poem 1, but in a more forceful and metaphorical fashion. The world of the poet and the world of the politician, military man and traveler

¹¹ For useful discussion, see Ramsby (2007) 77–82.

are incompatible.¹² In attempting to join Messalla, at his request, the poet is removed from his source of life, Delia, and in this unbreathable atmosphere his life ebbs. He saves himself by resuming his elegiac *persona* in the act of writing the elegy, simultaneously separating himself from Messalla, re-entering the world to which he more truly belongs. Tibullus has scripted a performance of failed escape into the “real world,” envisaged as an alien element in which he cannot survive. The poem restores elegy as it restores the elegist, by confirming its antagonism to the official world that Messalla and his associates inhabit.¹³

The very last Tibullan poem, 2.6, repeats this drama, though with reference to a Macer instead of Messalla. Macer is represented going off on a military campaign: *castra Macer sequitur* (“Macer is off to the army camp,” 2.6.1).¹⁴ Tibullus, weary of his frustrations in love, feels an impulse to go with him:

castra peto, ualeatque Venus ualeantque puellae;
et mihi sunt uires et mihi laeta tuba est.

(Tib. 2.6.9–10)

I’m off to camp. Farewell Venus, farewell girls.
I am strong. I thrill to the sound of a bugle.

But his enthusiasm vanishes in a moment, when the slightest sign from his mistress dispels the fantasy of escape:

magna loquor, sed magnifice mihi magna locuto
excutunt clausae fortia uerba fores.

iuravi quotiens rediturum ad limina numquam!

cum bene iuravi, pes tamen ipse redit.

(Tib. 2.6.11–14)

I talk boldly, but as I utter bold sayings,
her closed door disperses my bravado.
Often I’ve sworn never to return to her door.
Against my oath, my feet take me back.

¹² The common reference in scholarship to the “world” of the elegist is no mere cliché, but has a basis in the poetry which frequently sets the poet in a separate and incompatible environment from ordinary Romans.

¹³ The poet’s physical separation and different sphere of life from Messalla are reiterated in poem 2.1, where Messalla is toasted in his absence (31–2), and his military success over Aquitania and subsequent triumphal honors (33–4) are contrasted with the poet’s quiet rural and poetic preoccupations (*rura cano rurisque deos*, “I sing of the countryside and the gods of the countryside,” 2.1.37).

¹⁴ Some commentators have suggested Macer is a poet, planning to write an epic, rather than physically joining an armed expedition. See Putnam (1973) 196; Murgatroyd (1994) xviii–xix.

Thus, from his first poem to his last, Tibullus exploits the tension between his chosen life and priorities and those of his male addressees, toying with the temptation to return to the herd, but re-enacting to the last his inability or unwillingness to conform. In this respect, the roles of Macer and Messalla in Tibullus' poetry are analogous. Of the many aspects of Augustan literary "patronage" that are wholly unlike literary patronage in other societies and eras,¹⁵ not least is the way that a patron like Messalla is co-opted into the elegist's poems to play a ready-made part as male addressee who, along with other male addressees, is cast as the culturally endorsed exemplary Roman against whom the poet's self-dramatizing alienation is measured.

The contrast is maintained throughout, even at the risk, in some critics' eyes, of endangering the unity of a particular poem. In 2.1 Tibullus introduces Messalla without forewarning at line 31, in the character of one who is specifically "absent" (*absentis*, 32) from the rustic rituals that form the elegy's main subject. He is invited, as one external to the rural life, to enter it and lend his inspiration to the poet (*huc ades aspiraue mihi*, 35), yet he disappears from the poem after the next line, remaining permanently outside the poet's own environment. Messalla's name has been invoked here in such a way as to lament his self-imposed remoteness from participation in the elegist's life, a remoteness linked with incompatible military priorities (*triumphis*, 33). The device is reversed in 2.5, though with similar implications, where it is the poet's incongruous activities as an unhappy lover (at 107–12) that seem to impinge on a formal observance of Messallinus' initiation into a priesthood. Emotionally the poet locates himself elsewhere, incorrigibly an elegist even when acting the part of *uates* (114). Far from being just an embarrassing intrusion of elegiac material into an encomiastic occasion,¹⁶ the expression of the poet's personal *querimonia* reminds us that the poem is, after all, an elegy. It is entirely consistent with Tibullus' portrayal of his disjunctive relationship with Messalla elsewhere. The poet is psychologically immured in another world, even when he most seems to have escaped from it. In terms of the overarching elegiac

¹⁵ White (1993) 32–3. That Tibullus never mentions Augustus himself has regularly attracted comment, some finding it politically significant: e.g., Ball (1975) 738; Williams (1990) 266–7; White (1993) 39; others excusing it as unremarkable, e.g., Murgatroyd (1980) 11; Lambert (2003) 47–60.

¹⁶ Yet see Putnam (1973) 8 for other "ambiguities" in 2.5; also Ball (1983) 213. Committed to a more "propagandist" view are Solmsen (1962) 299; Bright (1978); Gosling (1987) 333–9; Murgatroyd (1994) 166–7.

strategy of Tibullus' poetry, the six lines at 107–12 are the most decisive part of poem 2.5 and function analogously, though superficially with the opposite effect, to the six lines at 31–6 of poem 2.1.

Propertius, too, constructs scenarios of the same type. Poem 1.6 is a classic example, where the poet rejects an invitation to join Tullus in his official travels, citing his own incompatibility with the normal Roman career path as taken by his addressee:

tu patruī meritis conare anteire secures,
 et uetera oblitis iura refer sociis.
 nam tua non aetas umquam cessauit amori,
 semper at armatae cura fuit patriae.

 me sine, quem semper uoluit fortuna iacere,
 hanc animam extremae reddere nequitiae.
 multi longinquo periere in amore libenter,
 in quorum numero me quoque terra tegat.
 non ego sum laudi, non natus idoneus armis.
 (Prop. 1.6.19–22, 25–9)

You compete with the axes of office won by your uncle
 and you restore old laws to heedless allies.
 Your youth has never taken time out for love,
 always occupied in service to your warring country.

 Allow me, designed by Fortune for constant indolence,
 to deliver my dying breath to worthlessness.
 Many have died gladly during a long love affair.
 Among their number I too want to be buried.
 I wasn't born for glory or made for war.

In 3.7 Propertius writes an elegy for Paetus, who drowned in a shipwreck while on a trading voyage to Egypt, intent on profit: *ergo sollicitae tu causa, pecunia, vitae!* ("therefore you, Money, are the cause of an anxious life!," 3.7.1).¹⁷ The narrative of Paetus' pathetic death is closed with a personal reflection by the poet in which he recommits himself to a life in thrall to his mistress rather than to the pursuit of wealth.

at tu, saeue Aquilo, numquam mea uela uidebis:
 ante fores dominae condar oportet iners.
 (Prop. 3.7.71–2)
 But you, cruel wind, will never see sails of mine. Ever inactive,
 I'll be laid to rest before my mistress' door.

¹⁷ On 3.7 see Warden (1980) 97–9; Miller (2004) 137–43.

In Propertius' case the ritual of continual recommitment to his chosen *persona* is most often played out in literary terms, where the postulated alternative is not so much relocation to another sphere of life but to another sphere of poetry. He teases the reader with the possibility that (most often under Maecenas' influence) he may either turn himself into an epicist or turn elegy into something unlike itself. In book 1 he contrasts his elegiacs with the hexameters of Ponticus (1.7) and warns his addressee that he too will come to prefer elegy should he ever fall in love. Propertius and his genre are vindicated in 1.9 when he reveals that Ponticus *is* in love, and this, claims Propertius, proves the inescapability of elegy even for its critics, like writers of martial epic (1.9.9–14). This move, by which the elegist turns the tables on his addressee by not only resisting the pressure to reorient his poetry and lifestyle, but also by figuratively drawing him into the elegist's world, is replicated with Maecenas in 3.9. After politely declining Maecenas' attempt to have him tackle grander themes (*quid me scribendi tam uastum mittis in aequor?*, "why do you push me out on such a vast sea of writing?," 3.9.3), Propertius argues that Maecenas himself prefers to withdraw from public life into the shadows (29–30) when he has the opportunity, and is himself, therefore, to be read as exemplifying the superior attraction of the approach to life adopted by the elegiac poet:

at tua, Maecenas, uitae praecepta recepi,
 cogor et exemplis te superare tuis.
 (Prop. 3.9.21–2)

But I have taken on your order of life, Maecenas.
 I'm driven by your own example to outdo you.

In his private actions, the poet claims, Maecenas himself validates, as had Ponticus in 1.9, the poet's choice of elegy and rejection of public themes.

From the beginning of Propertius' second book, Maecenas takes over the advocacy of non-elegiac subjects and verse forms. Propertius laments that he is not, by nature, an epic poet. If he were, he would write about Augustus, but he is not up to it:

quod mihi si tantum, Maecenas, fata dedissent,
 ut possem heroas ducere in arma manus,

 bellaque resque tui memorarem Caesaris, et tu
 Caesare sub magno cura secunda fores.

(Prop. 2.1.17–18, 25–6)

If only, Maecenas, the fates had given me the skill
 to place heroes' hands on their weapons,

 I'd record your Caesar's wars and achievements, and you,
 after Caesar's greatness, would be my second theme.

This can be and is commonly interpreted as a clever *recusatio* designed to praise Augustus in the act of declining to do so.¹⁸ It seems to me, though, that that is only superficially the effect. More important is the re-affirmation of the poet's elegiac credentials; a renewal of his self-construction as innately suited to another life, that of lover and love poet. The message to his readers, present and future, is more important than the message to Maecenas. The Propertius they know is back at work:

nauita de uentis, de tauris narrat arator,
 enumerat miles uulnera, pastor ouis;
 nos contra angusto uersamus proelia lecto:
 qua pote quisque, in ea conterat arte diem.
 (Prop. 2.1.43–6)

The sailor tells of winds, the farmer of cattle,
 the soldier counts his wounds, the shepherd his flock.
 I, by contrast, fight my battles in a narrow bed.
 Let each pass his time in the calling he knows best.

Propertius seems prepared to contemplate concessions again in 2.10, promising to reform his poetics and write of Augustus and wars:

iam libet et fortis memorare ad proelia turmas
 et Romana mei dicere castra ducis.

 nunc uolo subducto grauior procedere uultu,
 nunc aliam citharam me mea Musa docet.
 surge, anime, ex humili; iam, carmina, sumite uires;
 Pierides, magni nunc erit oris opus.
 (Prop. 2.10.3–4, 9–12)

Now I'm inclined to write of battle-ready troops
 and describe the Roman camp of my leader.

 Now I wish to proceed more soberly, my expression stern.
 Now my Muse instructs me to choose another cithara.
 Rise up, my soul, from the depths. Take strength, poems.
 More sonorous, Pierians, will be my future work.

¹⁸ On 2.1 see Stahl (1985) 162–71; Miller (2004) 137–43.

This is self-exhortation that is never brought to fruition in the ensuing poems. The effect would be all the more marked if 2.10 is, as some believe, the last poem of a book,¹⁹ for it would hold out the possibility of the poet's renouncing love as a theme and turning his talents to the celebration of the emperor. But the succeeding poems of the existing book 2, all 24 of them, are erotic in theme. Augustus is only alluded to in passing in 2.15 by a reference to Actium as a tragic scene of death and drowning. The poet's failure to implement his brief enthusiasm of 2.10 turns it into a short-lived and unrealistic fantasy, progressively disintegrated by every poem that follows.

Books 3 and 4 show Propertius declaring, especially in the initial poems of each book, an intention to convert himself into a different sort of poet, modeling himself particularly on Callimachus (3.1.1)²⁰ and, in the latter book, adopting Roman national themes (4.1.65–70). Both opening poems, however, cast doubt on the writer's ability to treat of national and warlike subjects:

ah ualeat, Phoebum quicumque moratur in armis!

.....
et mecum in curru parui uectantur Amores.

.....
multi, Roma, tuas laudes annalibus addent,
qui finem imperii Bactra futura canent.
sed, quod pace legas, opus hoc de monte Sororum
detulit intacta pagina nostra uia.
mollia, Pegasides, date uestro sertae poetae:
non faciet capiti dura corona meo.

(Prop. 3.1.7, 11, 15–20)

Ah, goodbye to whoever would detain Apollo in arms.

.....
With me small Cupids ride in the chariot.

.....
Many in their annals, Rome, will enhance your glory,
naming Bactria as the new bound of empire.
My page brought back this work from the Sisters' mount
by an unknown path, a book to read during peace.

¹⁹ The theory being that the present book 2, which is considerably larger than other books of the time, is a conflation of poems that were originally in two separate books. For a vigorous rejection of this, see Wyke (1987) 165–73.

²⁰ The influence of Callimachus is universally acknowledged but variously interpreted: Hubbard (1974) 68–115; Veyne (1988) 15–30; Pillinger (1969) 171–99; Coleman (2003a) 37–45; Hutchinson (2006) 10–13; Hollis (2006) 97–125.

Pegasids, give your poet soft garlands.
A hard crown does not suit my head.

The Callimachean emphasis is not convincingly able to be interpreted as a declaration of dissatisfaction with love poetry and a desire to change themes.²¹ The contrast Propertius makes in stating his Callimachean program is not with love poetry but with epic (*armis*, “in arms,” 7). Callimachus is drawn in as an ally to support elegy against the pressure or temptation to deal with imperial themes (*finem imperii*, “the bound of empire,” 16). The content of book 3 bears this out. At the start of 3.2 the poet expressly re-asserts the continuity of his past and present poetry:

carminis interea nostri redeamus in orbem
gaudeat ut solito tacta puella sono.
(Prop. 3.2.1–2)

Let us revert now to the world of my song,
so my girl may rejoice, hearing the familiar tune.

His poems will be monuments to his mistress’ beauty (3.2.18). In 3.3 both Apollo and Calliope appear to the poet and insist that he stick to his past elegiac themes and avoid straying into new poetic modes and subjects (3.3.15–24, 39–50). Cynthia and the life of the lover continue to dominate the poet’s attention, especially at the end of the book, almost as if Propertius had set out to frustrate those readers who might seek to impose on his third book any suggestion of digression away from the elegiac attitudes of book 1. Poems 24 and 25 of book 3, transparently a single poem, and the last of the third book, are composed with clear and consistent reference to the first poem of book 1, and while appearing to be a final rejection of Cynthia, they assert paradoxically a failure to abandon Cynthia as a theme dominating the poet’s work. It is the last poem rather than the first that is positioned best to show the implementation of any new poetic direction in a book of verse. Those who seek to read 3.1 as indicating a movement toward public and Augustan subjects cannot ignore the end of the book, which fixes the poet back in his introverted obsession with Cynthia, as at the beginning of book 1.²² The book structure articulates the impossibility of the poet’s attempting to disavow his elegiac roots.

²¹ On 3.1 see Stahl (1985) 190–3.

²² Furthermore, poem 3.1 strongly asserts the poet’s acute awareness that his most important audience is not Augustan Rome, but his posthumous readership: *at mihi quod*

Similarly in book 4, Propertius begins by expressing an ambition to write of Roman etiology in the manner of Callimachus,²³ but even without the fortune teller's insistence at the end of the poem that he is destined to continue immured in the elegiac genre, writing of love (4.1.135–46), the poet has already sown the seeds of doubt over his ability to change tack.

optima nutricum nostris, lupa Martia rebus,
 qualia creuerunt moenia lacte tuo!
 moenia namque pio coner disponere uersu:
 ei mihi, quod nostro est paruus in ore sonus!
 (Prop. 4.1.55–8)

Best nurse for our growth, she-wolf of Mars,
 What mighty walls arose from your milk!
 I'd like to describe those walls in pious verse:
 Alas for the lack of power in my voice!

Again the structure of the book undermines the program espoused in the first poem, which itself has cast serious doubt on the poet's ability and commitment to implement the stated program. At the heart of the book are the two great Cynthia poems, 4.7 and 4.8, both supreme expressions of Propertius' total enslavement to the mistress of his first poems of book 1 and, by implication, admissions of her dominance over his poetry. The fourth book realizes the poet's prophecy made long before in the conclusion of poem 1.12: *Cynthia prima fuit, Cynthia finis erit* ("Cynthia was the beginning, and Cynthia will be the end," 1.12.20). The fourth book plays out, even more spectacularly than previously, the poet's failure to emerge from the emotional world of love elegy into a new type of poetry focused on Rome and its national traditions. In fact, the poet goes out of his way to imply continuities between his last and first books, not only by including the Cynthia poems in book 4 (after claiming to have finished with her at the end of book 3), but by reiterating at 4.1.121–30 his Umbrian origins as first set out in his

uiu detraxerit inuida turba, / post obitum duplici faenore reddet Honos; / omnia post obitum fingit maiora uetustas: / maius ab exsequiis nomen in ora uenit. /.../ meque inter seros laudabit Roma nepotes: / illum post cineres augur ipse diem ("What the envious crowd denies me in life / Honor will repay me in death, with interest. / After death, time's passage makes everything greater. / A name means more when spoken after the funeral. /.../ Rome's distant descendants will praise me too. / I predict such a day after I am turned to ashes," Prop. 3.1.21–4, 35–6). The identification of the implied reader as post-Augustan is reiterated in the conclusion of the next poem (3.2.25–6).

²³ On 4.1 see Stahl (1985) 255–64; Gunther (2006b) 358–64.

“signature poem” 1.22, and by ending book 4 with a poem reminiscent of the closure of book 1 in that both 4.11 and 1.21 adopt the same form of a message to a spouse or betrothed from someone recently placed beyond communication by death.

Propertius and Tibullus are equally persistent in the contrast they draw between themselves as elegiac personalities and their non-elegiac male associates, whether writers of epic or wealthy and well-connected power brokers like Messalla and Maecenas. This consistency of attitude abides despite the parade of names and the toying with the abandonment or reconfiguring of the genre, both of which create the preconditions for Elegy to re-assert her authority and pull her poets back into line. Political interpretations, of Propertius in particular, assume a progressivist model in which he moves from relative independence in book 1 to an association with Maecenas in the second and third books to a more direct support for Augustus’ position and policies in book 4.²⁴ This progressivist model is not only a reflection of modern conceptions of personal and professional development and the inescapable centrality of political ideology, but it relies on the changing surface detail of the poetry while remaining blind to the consistent pattern running underneath. The elegiac poet’s task is to remain the same, to continue to speak in a voice alienated from normative or conventional or publicly sanctioned life; to articulate a feeling of disconnectedness from the rest of the world, like that felt by a person in the grip of love or mourning. Part and parcel of this state is to feel its discomfort. The poet is tempted by the fantasy of integration, of a return to the safety of collective *mores* and conformity with socially approved behavior. Elegy, as a genre, is driven by this tension, but the fantasy is never permitted to become reality. The poems live in the space created by the poets’ dearth of ideology.

In the work of Tibullus it is the objects of his erotic desire that change (Delia, Marathus, Nemesis), though his subjection to desire itself remains constant. In the case of Propertius, Cynthia is the lover who dominates his affections throughout and it is rather his relationships with male acquaintances and addressees that change noticeably, in a way that brings upon him increasing pressure to align his poetry more closely with the values of the day. For the poet to surrender to

²⁴ In the case of Propertius, “discontinuity” is a recurrent motif in recent scholarship, e.g., Hutchinson (2006) 1–10. But for a competing approach, see Stahl (1985) 133–5.

this pressure is no less incompatible with elegy than if he were to marry his mistress and settle down to domestic tranquility, writing poems, perhaps, about the joys of parenthood.

Or by becoming a philosopher. One well established set of values endorsed by many of Rome's educated elite but clearly antagonistic to elegiac behavior was that advocated by the philosophical tradition, which regarded strong passions as destructive, the various schools disagreeing only as to whether they should be eliminated altogether or severely constricted.²⁵ Propertius' dream of escape from elegiac unease sometimes takes the form of an imagined retreat into philosophy. He will travel to Greece and

illic uel stadiis animum emendare Platonis
incipiam aut hortis, docte Epicure, tuis.
(Prop. 3.21.25–6)
there I'll begin to mend my soul in Plato's academy
or in your gardens, learned Epicurus.

Here, the distancing perspective of philosophy is accompanied by distance in space from his current situation, just as in 3.5 his dream of escape into philosophical speculation (3.5.23–47) is set in a distant time when *sparserit et nigras alba senecta comas* ("white old age has displaced my dark hair," 24). What is obvious to the reader is the unrealism of this line of thought; that it is as self-deluding as the lover's dedication of himself to *Mens Bona* ("Sound Mind") at 3.24.19. Philosophy in these poems functions in a way closely analogous to politics elsewhere in the corpus. The poet raises the specter of his entering a world where elegy as he writes it could not survive. That the elegist is tempted to become a philosopher, or an epic poet, or a warrior, or an apologist for the *princeps* or his policies, are all variations on a single rhetorical strategy that lies at the heart of elegy as a genre: the poet examines his map to plot the various routes back to social acceptance, yet is finally unable to take any of them. In elegy, politics, like philosophy, is always the servant of poetics. The one explicit political statement elegy makes is when it chooses, in true Roman fashion, to put an end to its life.

As Ovid reminds everyone in the last couplet of his *Amores*, elegy is quintessentially pacifist (*inbelles elegi*, "unwarlike elegiacs," *Am.* 3.15.19), a point he had also made in his first elegy (*ferrea cum uestris bella ualete*

²⁵ For a summary see Gill (1997) 5–15.

modis, “goodbye iron warfare, and your meter,” *Am.* 1.1.28).²⁶ That the reader can be relied upon to take this for granted underpins the humor of poems like *Amores* 1.9 which purports, on the surface, to attempt a less than convincing case for the lover as militant. Tibullus and Propertius are wholly in accord with this Ovidian outlook and persistent in associating themselves with *pax*. In his first sentence, Tibullus distinguishes himself from those who pursue a career of military adventure (1.1.1–6) and in the same poem contrasts Messalla’s glorious campaigns with his own chosen life of love and idleness: *quaeso segnis inersque uocer* (“I ask that I be talked about as sluggish and inactive,” 1.1.58).²⁷ Propertius at 2.15.41–8 (quoted above) contrasts his own harmless manner of life with the destructive militarism of the wider world and especially Rome itself. If one does not go into the contextualized connotations of *pax* too closely, this pacifist outlook of the elegists might be misread as an endorsement of the *Pax Augusta*.²⁸ By the elegists, though, *pax* is stripped of its triumphalist and imperialist trappings and Augustus himself is conspicuously associated not with peace but with war. As Tibullus describes it, peace was the original and natural state of humankind, disturbed by the development of the technologies of war (1.10.1–12): *tum caedes hominum generi, tum proelia nata* (“then came into existence battles and slaughter for the human race,” 3).²⁹ Peace was the parent of agriculture and viticulture:

interea pax arua colat. pax candida primum
 duxit araturos sub iuga curua boues;
 pax aluit uites et sucos condidit uuae,
 funderet ut nato testa paterna merum;
 pace bidens uomerque nitent...

(Tib. 1.10.45–8)

Meanwhile let Peace farm the fields. Radiant peace
 first brought oxen under the yoke for plowing;
 Peace grew vines and preserved the grape’s juice,
 so a son can pour wine from jars his father filled;
 In peace gleam plowshare and hoe...

²⁶ Like Propertius and Tibullus, he insists on the unchanging nature of the genre.

²⁷ Tibullus’ pacifism is widely recognized, for example, by Ball (1983). Others seek to qualify it, e.g., Lee-Stecum (1998) 30–1.

²⁸ As it is by Galinsky (1996) 275, 278; Cairns (2006) 345. Yet, as Tacitus wrote (*Ann.* 1.10), Romans were well aware that the peace established by Augustus was “bloody” (*pacem, sine dubio, post haec, uerum cruentam*) and inseparable from victory in war. For Propertius’ idea of peace, as opposed to the Augustan idea, see Commager (1974) 37–77; Stahl (1985) 355 n. 5.

²⁹ For perceptive comments on Tib. 1.10, see Ramsby (2007) 75.

The poet is nostalgic for the life he imagines his ancestors enjoyed before war intervened:

nec bella fuerunt
faginus astabat cum scyphus ante dapes.
non arces non uallus erat, somnumque petebat
securus uarias dux gregis inter oues.
tunc mihi uita foret uulgi nec tristia nossem
arma nec audissem corde micante tubam.
(Tib. 1.10.7–12)

There were no wars
when only beech wood cups accompanied the feast.
There were no citadels or ramparts and the shepherd slept
undisturbed amid his motley colored flock.
If only I'd lived then, I'd neither know the soldier's sword
nor hear with pounding heart the bugle's blast.

Augustus, or Octavian as he was, enters the poems of Propertius at the end of the first book as the commander of swords (*Caesarienses*, “Caesar’s swords,” 1.21.7) at the siege of Perugia in consequence of which the speaker, Gallus, has lost his life. This association with war is reinforced over and over again: *bella Caesaris* (“Caesar’s wars,” 2.1.25); *magnus Caesar in armis* (“Caesar, great in war,” 2.7.5); *Auguste, tuo... triumpho* (“Augustus... to your triumph,” 2.10.15–16); *gloria Caesaris... /... uicit* (“Caesar’s glory... conquered,” 2.16.41–2);³⁰ *Actia... litora... / Caesaris... rates* (“Actium’s... shore... Caesar’s... ships,” 2.34.62); *triumphum /... Augusto* (“triumph... for Augustus,” 3.11.49–52); and *Augusti fortia signa* (“brave standards of Augustus,” 3.12.2). No less categorically is Augustus portrayed as an embodiment of war in 4.6, the last of the poems in which he figures with any prominence.³¹ The

³⁰ In this case, Augustus is said also to have sheathed the sword, but this public gesture is part of his role (and *gloria*) as a military conqueror, in fact the culmination of his Actian victory described in the previous lines (2.16.37–40).

³¹ The scholarship on 4.6 is vast and divided in its treatment of the poem’s political sentiments. A good summary of opinions is Gurval (1998) 249–54. For interpretations that seek to read it as essentially patriotic and propagandist in intent, see Syme (1939) 467; Williams (1968) 51–4; Baker (1968); Hubbard (1974) 134–6; Baker (1983) 153–74; Cairns (1984) 129–68; Arkins (1989) 246–51; Mader (1989) 141–7; Mader (1990) 325–34; Newman (1997) 369–75; Coleman (2003) 37–45; Gunther (2006b) 353–95; and Hutchinson (2006) 154–5. For dissenting views, see Sullivan (1972) 17–34; Johnson (1973) 151–80; Connor (1978) 1–10; Richardson (1976) 446–7; Stahl (1985) 250–5; and Gurval (1998) 249–78. For Miller (2004) 208–9, the poem is a “poetic hall of mirrors in which any given passage reflects its opposite” and thus it “signals the end of elegy, for elegy defined itself in contradistinction to certain ideological norms”.

centre of this poem consists of an extended account of the battle of Actium (15–68), complete with divine machinery including a speech by Apollo.³² Augustus is a commander of military standards and victor (23–4). Apollo encourages him to conquer (*uincede mari*, “conquer at sea,” 39); he throws his spear as Apollo fires his arrows (55–6); Julius Caesar, now a god, declares that the achievement of military supremacy at Actium confers legitimacy on Augustus as a true successor to himself:

At pater Idalio miratur Caesar ab astro:
“sum deus; est nostri sanguinis ista fides.”

(Prop. 4.6.59–60)

Father Caesar from the Idalian star watches admiringly:
“I am a god; this is proof you’re my true son.”

One thing is quite clear here: the temple of Actian Apollo, for which the poem purports to be an etiological explanation, is no monument to peace but to military triumph. Yet, more importantly, the contrast with the elegist’s personal incompatibility with this type of public celebration of success in war is thematized and foregrounded. In an elaborate introduction to the poem (1–14), Propertius transforms himself from elegist to *uates* (10), to the bard as priest who takes on a formal role in sacrificial ritual (*sacra facit uates: sint ora fauentia sacris*, “The priest begins his rites. Hush your voices,” 1).³³ He embarks on what he considers a *nouum...iter* (“a strange path,” 10), calling on the Muse, Calliope, to endow him with the means to speak of the temple of Apollo and Augustus’ fame (11–14).³⁴ Propertius’ personal voice is suppressed as the Muse carries the narrative of Actium (15–68), making way for Apollo himself to speak at lines 37–54. Nearing the end of the poem, the personal voice of the poet re-asserts itself to dismiss the subject of war: *bella satis cecini* (“of war I have sung enough,” 69). Apollo is imagined putting aside his arms to preside over *placidus...choros* (“peaceful danc-

³² For a perceptive treatment of Actium in Prop. 4.6 (and elsewhere), see Gurval (1998) 254–78.

³³ Miller (2004) 204: “The poetic voice of 4.6 is not ‘Propertius,’ then, but the negation of that voice.” This is true in so far as the poet changes his voice at the beginning of the poem, but the self-consciousness about this transformation of voice is very much “Propertius,” and his elegiac voice is recovered at the end of 4.6, then forcefully reinstated in the two succeeding elegies. Poems 4.7 and 4.8, which Miller does not discuss, are massive obstacles to his thesis (Miller [2004] 209) that 4.6 “signals the end of elegy.”

³⁴ The irony is unlikely to have been missed by perceptive readers that it had been precisely Calliope and Apollo who had dissuaded Propertius from writing on martial subjects in 3.3.

ing,” 70). In a reversal of the self-transformation at the poem’s start, Propertius—after a matching reference to the Muse (75, cf. 11) and an invoking of Bacchus (76) to turn the ritual back towards informality—retransforms himself, placing himself in imagination among his fellow poets, drinking wine, acknowledging at a great distance in time and space the military activities of Augustus and his generals. At the end of the poem the contrast is fully re-instated between the far-ranging warrior and the sociable,³⁵ relaxed and city-dwelling poet:

sic noctem patera, sic ducam carmine, donec
iniciat radios in mea uina dies.

(Prop. 4.6.85–6)

So will I extend the night with cup and song
until daylight casts its rays upon my wine.

Poem 4.6 is structured as a set of utterances within utterances, in which the poet’s words contain the Muse’s, which contain Apollo’s speech.³⁶ Propertius ritually suppresses his own voice in favor of that of the Muse, but recovers it at the end. It is no accident that he has placed the two Cynthia poems of book 4 immediately after 4.6, so as to underscore his return unscathed from his vatic excursion. Propertius, of course, wrote all of 4.6, including the words attributed to Calliope and Apollo, but he also wrote the end of the poem and 4.7 and 4.8 in such a way as to contextualize the political content and confirm its alienness from his own conception of his role as elegist.

While the direct influence of Callimachus on the technique of 4.6 is justly recognized, the poet seems also to have had in mind the model provided by Tibullus for the subtle negotiation of the elegist in dealing with the Roman political elite while also preserving a sense of his own distance and distinctive attitude of mind. In 1.7 Tibullus uses the more personal form of the birthday poem (1–2, 49–54, 63–4) to frame and disarm the public celebration of Messalla’s military successes.³⁷ As in

³⁵ As Ovid notes (*Am.* 3.15.19), elegy is not only *inbelles* (“unwarlike”) but also *genialis* (“congenial”).

³⁶ The Callimachean sophistication of the poem has often been noted.

³⁷ Despite this, scholars insist on taking the modality as panegyric. Cairns (1979) 171 goes to extraordinary lengths to recant his earlier, and more accurate characterization, in Cairns (1972) 167–9, of Tibullus 1.7 as a “genethliakon,” saying “the overall including genre is the ‘triumph poem’ = dithyramb, and the genethliakon is the included genre.” For additional discussions of Tib. 1.7 see Solmsen (1962) 295–325; Putnam (1973) 118–19; Ball (1975); Murgatroyd (1980) 208–13; Lee-Stecum (1998) 205–26; Lambert (2003) 47–60.

Propertius 4.6, the centre of the poem climbs toward the heavens to invoke divinities, the god of the Nile at line 23, Osiris at 43. The latter, whose gifts to humanity are catalogued at length (29–48), is specifically and unambiguously identified with Roman Bacchus (39–42), who carries here the same connotations of convivial relaxation and relief from obligation (41–8) as he does in Propertius 4.6. Tibullus draws a more direct line connecting this passage with peace by describing Osiris as the god responsible for agriculture and wine production (29–38), the same cultural attainments attributed to *Pax* three poems later at 10.45–9.³⁸ Corresponding to the three couplets (3–8), just after the opening birthday reference, that deal with Messalla's conquests in war, the three couplets (57–62) just before the closing birthday reference, celebrate not warfare but Messalla's socially beneficial activity of road building and repair which, far from causing injury, prevent it (62). The movement of the poem diverts the reader away from the anticipated celebration of victory onto a journey that reaches its climax in a celebration of the antithesis of war, in the image of a farmer travelling home at night along the Via Latina in perfect safety.

te canet agricola, a magna cum uenerit urbe
serus, inoffensum rettuleritque pedem.

(Tib. 1.7.61–2)

The farmer will sing of you when he travels home late
from the great city, arriving without damage to his feet.

It also requires an exceptionally narrow reading that disregards context to find an unreserved enthusiasm for Augustan military expansionism in other Propertian poems like 3.4.³⁹ The poem begins with apparent excitement at the prospect of a lucrative expedition against the Indians: *arma deus Caesar dities meditatur ad Indos* ("divine Caesar is planning a campaign against the wealthy Indians," 3.4.1). Even within this poem there is much to rouse the reader's suspicions, in the overstated exclamations and imperatives (7–10), the uncharacteristic approval of the quest for profit (1–3; contrast 3.7), the humorous contradiction that

³⁸ These same activities are said by Tibullus to be under the protection of the gods of the countryside (*rurisque deos*) at 2.1.37–46. See Putnam (1973) 150.

³⁹ On this poem and its relation to 3.5 see Nethercut (1961) 389–407; Nethercut (1970) 385–407; Sullivan (1972) 20–1; Richardson (1976) 330; Stahl (1985) 192–205; Gold (1987) 163–4; Miller (2004) 149–57.

treats Augustus as immortal (*deus*, 1) at the start of the poem but still on the waiting list for immortality at the end (19–20); and the usual contrast between the triumphant leader and the poet who, on this occasion, plans on using the triumphal procession for an outing with his mistress (15). More obviously subversive of the tone of 3.4 is that it forms a pair with 3.5, or perhaps they are parts of a single poem. The opening word of 3.5, *Pacis* (“Peace”) is unmistakably antithetical to the opening word of 3.4, *Arma* (“Arms”).

Pacis Amor deus est, pacem ueneramur amantes:
sat mihi cum domina proelia dura mea.

(Prop. 3.5.1–2)

Of Peace, Love is the divinity. We lovers worship peace.
The only fierce conflicts for me are those with my mistress.

In 3.5 the impulse to make war is viewed as an innate flaw of human nature (7–12), a Promethean error that results in an inveterate drive to add war to war in an endless chain (*armis nectimus arma noua*, “we interlink new wars with old,” 12). Propertius goes on to reject another key component of 3.4, namely the profit motive. Whereas Augustus’ eye is on the Indians’ wealth (*dites*, 3.4.1; *gemmiferi*, 2; *magna...merces*, 3; *spoliis*, 13; *praeda*, 21), Propertius asserts, in contrast, that he has no ambition at all to own large estates (3.5.3), drink from bejeweled cups (4), or possess Corinthian bronze (6); for in his eyes gold is not attractive but hateful (*inuiso...auro*, 5). In the context of mortality, he argues (13–18), victor and defeated become indistinguishable in death, and all the dead are, in the end, equally stripped of the trappings of wealth. In this way the imperialist ideology trumpeted in 3.4 is systematically dismantled in 3.5. The last couplet in 3.5 (echoing the antithesis of the final couplet of 3.4) reiterates the incompatibility of the poet’s choice of life with that of the proponents of military adventure:

exitus hic uitae superet mihi: uos, quibus arma
grata magis, Crassi signa referte domum.
(Prop. 3.5.47–8)

Let that be my end of life. You others whom arms
gratify, go bring home Crassus’ standards.

The last word of the last hexameter, *arma*, can hardly fail to put the reader in mind of the same word in the first position in the first hexameter of 3.4. While the *uos, quibus* of line 47 at first seems designed to describe a generalized type, the reference to Crassus in the pentameter

makes the rejected militarist mentality specifically Roman. The avenging of Crassus was one of the stated goals of Augustus' Indian war at 3.4.9. The closing four words of poem 3.5, no less pointedly than the opening four words of the same poem, provide corroboration, if any were needed, that the *deus Caesar* of 3.4 is the signal representative of values most inimical to those upheld by the elegiac poet.

Much of the critical terminology used in the scholarship on elegy is packed with dubious or misleading implications. The genre is often designated "Roman love elegy" or "Roman erotic elegy,"⁴⁰ descriptions which suggest that it is defined by a single theme and which invite the reader to separate out, as extraneous, poems or parts thereof that address other themes. Consequently, different rules of reading come to be applied unselfconsciously to the treatment of the erotic relationships from those applied to the non-erotic relationships, whether with poets, patrons or *princeps*. This is tied to the traditional acceptance of a canon that embraces, problematically, Ovid's *Amores* alongside the elegies of Propertius and Tibullus.⁴¹ The Ovidian collection, however, distorts the conceptualization of the genre because the poems survive in the form of a reduced corpus from five books to three, with the ones that are extant almost exclusively focused on the theme of love and having comparatively little to say about the poet's male friends.⁴² Even in the treatment of love, the *Amores* are so strongly colored by parody and social satire as barely to belong to the same poetic mode as the works of Tibullus and Propertius. "Love elegy" or "erotic elegy" are more obviously strained as descriptions of the poetry of Ovid's predecessors than they seem to be when the *Amores* are imported into the genre. Ovid's treatment of the poet's alienation, such as it is, is invariably exaggerated and ironical, and no male addressee in the *Amores* is given the degree of prominence accorded Messalla by Tibullus or Maecenas by Propertius.

Elegy is not monothematic. Mortality, for instance, and the feelings of the bereaved or attributed to the deceased are never far away in

⁴⁰ As in the titles (and subtitles) of well known books by Luck (1959); Veyne (1988); Kennedy (1993); James (2003); Miller (2004).

⁴¹ And prominently, the fragment of Gallus, the value of which has been greatly overstated in much recent scholarship, e.g., Cairns (2006); Newman (1997) 17–53. The terms "love elegy" and "erotic elegy" have the effect of marginalizing most of Ovid's other work in elegiacs.

⁴² This is not to suggest, though, that there is not a political dimension to Ovid's erotic poems, on which see Davis (2006).

the poetry of Tibullus and Propertius.⁴³ In the work of these poets two key relationships, not one, are constitutive of the genre: first, the relation to love and, secondly, the relation to the world. The latter is no less vital to the genre than the former. It is a source of tension equal to that caused by the object of the poet's passion, and conditions the deep sense of disconnection from normal life that the poet never manages to overcome. This estrangement is particularly illustrated by the inability of the poet to adopt the outlook of the male addressees and male authority figures drawn into the poems for the purpose of reminding the writer and the reader of the social and political ideology from which the poet has become unmoored.

Similar confusions arise from the designation of certain poems as "programmatic," invariably the initial poems of each book. No doubt these poems were written and positioned carefully with a view to guiding the reader's expectations in his or her experience of the succeeding poems. It would be naïve, though, to assume they were written first. They are more likely to have been composed after the others, with a view to adding a further dimension to their collective impression. The "programmatic" poems typically attract a more literal reading than the rest because they are treated as contextualizing what follows but not to be contextualized by it. They are not, however, privileged keys to the author's meaning or situation. Instead, they serve as the foundations of the ludic strategy of the collection, raising anticipations usually unfulfilled, tensions usually unresolved and, in Propertius' case, a degree of suspense as to whether the poet will abandon or betray his calling. They energize afresh the genre's characteristic flirtation with its own self-annihilation. There is a question here also concerning readership. Poems like Tibullus 1.1 or Propertius 2.1 purport to be utterances designed for the ears of Messalla or Maecenas. A reductive interpretation may treat them as written for this audience of one; yet that is to marginalize the other party to the poetic transaction envisaged and created by the very act of publication, the wider readership among not only contemporaries but posterity. For these readers, Messalla and Maecenas have been constructed as enemies of alterity, in relation to whom the poet's alienation from official Romanness can be tracked and weighed.

⁴³ Even Ovid includes an obituary poem (for Tibullus) in the *Amores* (3.9).

Which parts of a poet's work are "programmatic"? Which parts should be regarded as conditioning the reader's response to subsequent parts? That Propertius' first book may be programmatic for his work as a whole is a possibility rarely considered,⁴⁴ since it is treated (even in nomenclature, as the *Monobiblos*) as distinct and preliminary, narrowly focused on his love for Cynthia and devoid of political engagement with Maecenas and Augustus. Yet book 1 is by no means dis severed from books 2 to 4; in fact, the later books strive to assert a close correspondence with it. Nothing illustrates this so well as the systematic and detailed echoing of 1.1 in the last poem of book 3 (24/25). Poems about Cynthia maintain their prominence, even in book 4.⁴⁵ The supposed distinctiveness of book 1 depends on the disregarding of the last three poems, none of which is about Cynthia.⁴⁶ Poem 1.20 describing a myth of Hercules foreshadows 4.9. As noted previously, 1.22 on the poet's Umbrian origins is recalled in 4.1.62–4 and 121–30. Above all, several poems in book 4 recollect 1.21⁴⁷ in mode (4.7 and 4.11, the voice from the grave) and theme (4.3, the spouse or betrothed separated by war). Such links as these make it difficult to deny that those units of text commonly viewed as "programmatic" are selective and far from immune to challenge and debate. The reductionist interpretation of the initial poems of books exaggerates the significance of book divisions and combines with the disconnected treatment of book 1 to fragment the overarching congruity of Propertius' work, the result being an emphasis on the transitory details book per book and a blindness to their more profound continuity.

That the words "patron" and "patronage" are also loaded with misleading implications is well understood by most critics of Roman poetry.⁴⁸ For the uninitiated, "patronage" can appear to offer an easily

⁴⁴ Stahl (1985) xiii comes close: "I dedicate a large part of my studies to Propertius' first book, the *Monobiblos*, because I have convinced myself that in this book the poet has already envisaged with brilliance and extraordinary intelligence the possibilities as well as the limitations of his life's career."

⁴⁵ Where, in fact, 4.7 seems to be, at least in part, a reversal of 1.19 (on the theme of the separation of Cynthia and Propertius by death) and 4.8 seems, at least in part, to be a reversal of 1.3 (where Propertius' enjoyment of a party without Cynthia leads to her forceful re-assertion of her power over him). On past scholarship that draws connections between books 1 and 4, see Janan (2001) 28–9.

⁴⁶ On Prop. 1.21 and 22 see Stahl (1985) 99–129.

⁴⁷ Which does, of course, make reference to Augustus: *Caesaris enses*, 7.

⁴⁸ See especially Gold (1987) and White (1993) 33–4 on the conceptual and historical problems with the term.

grasped explanatory tool for understanding the political situation of the elegists by shifting poetry into the more familiar and less complicated terrain of social history. On the other hand, it can also lead to false parallels with literary patronage in other ages, cultures, and economic conditions. Neither Tibullus nor Propertius gives any indication of being financially dependent or concerned to pursue increased wealth or property.⁴⁹ In fact, they take pride (especially Tibullus) in their repudiation of such goals (e.g., Tib. 1.1; Prop. 3.7.1–8). The term “patron” when used by scholars of Maecenas or Messalla in relation to the elegists isolates them from the roles constructed for them in the poems. They are not outside the poetry but co-opted into it by the elegists, forced to become participants, to assume a character, to represent values with which the poet is at odds. Maecenas and Messalla cannot be treated in isolation from the wider group of male addressees against whom the poets differentiate their lives and outlook. They are the non-literary equivalent of writers of epic. Epic and panegyric are equally dangerous to elegy and need to be continually fended off. Maecenas and Messalla are principally brought on stage as first readers, whose imagined reactions to the poet’s words are made part of the poem itself, as it presents itself to all other members of the audience, present, and future. Part of the pleasure of the poems lies in the dramatic irony that allows us to perceive what the addressees cannot. Maecenas, like Messalla, is a *scriptus patronus*, just as Augustus is, inescapably, a *scriptus princeps*. Their real contemporary political influence (and the greater the better) is appropriated by the poets as exemplifying the extreme degree of ideological and political pressure they are generically bound to resist.

As the name implies, the *recusatio* is a mode of refusal. Its prominence in elegy, seen especially in the work of Propertius (in, for instance, 2.1, 3.1, 3.3, and 3.9) is taken for granted in the modern scholarship on elegy. Because, in declining an invitation to compose verse celebrating the public actions of famous men, the *recusatio* succeeds by exaggerating the poet’s inadequacy in the face of these acknowledged achievements, what is conveyed is a double message which is, from one point of view, about the subject and, from the other, about the author. Currently the *recusatio* is often read as if it were a mode of flattery, as if it represented a submission to pressure and acquiescence in the political ideology of

⁴⁹ Richardson (1976) 11. The insinuation of Syme (1939) 467 that Propertius received monetary support through Maecenas is unsupported by evidence.

the day on the part of the poet.⁵⁰ This requires us to take the *recusatio* as being a form not of ambivalent refusal but of unequivocal acceptance and to elide the poet's claim of being unable to comply with the request as a hypocritical formality, lacking in substance. It assumes the function of the *recusatio* to be to say "yes" with a pretence of reluctance. A less one-dimensional and reductive approach, which does not violate the poet's expressed position, is to accept that the function of the *recusatio* is, as the term itself informs us, to say "no," yet to defuse annoyance by attributing the refusal to the author's own lack of aptitude for the task. This gives due weight to the reason given by the poet for the refusal, which is no less important than the refusal itself. By means of the *recusatio* the poet defines himself as a particular type of writer.⁵¹ It is a device by which he can reiterate the impossibility of his being converted into a dissimilar type of writer, inconstant to his previous *persona*. Readers are made to peer over the brink of the unbridgeable gulf dividing the poet from the politician or, in terms of genre, elegy from panegyric. The governing theme of the *recusatio* is always this unbridgeable gulf itself. It is a vehicle for preserving the sense of distance between the addressee's mindset and the poet's. The *recusatio* is to the relation between the elegist and his "patron" as the *paraclausithyron* is to the relation between the elegist and his mistress. Both are literary forms that construct a barrier excluding the poet from a domain he can imagine but not step into. By its nature, the elegiac *recusatio* is a restatement of poetics by reference to incompatible political, social, and literary expectations.

Even more than other poetry, Roman elegy is a balancing act that requires audience participation. The genre lives in a liminal zone between literary convention and real life in the city of Rome under Augustus.⁵² Push it one way and it collapses into a self-referential game of literary subtleties; nudge it in the other direction and it dies on a hard surface of political influence and power negotiation. It is the reader's willingness to sustain the spell, to refuse to read reductively, that creates the necessary atmosphere for elegy to breathe. Its voices seek continually to reach out to the unreachable. The speaker attempts

⁵⁰ For the idea that there is a specifically "Augustan" type of *recusatio* that is used to express a desire to celebrate the *princeps*, see Williams (1968) 270–5. For reservations see Kennedy (1993) 35.

⁵¹ Sullivan (1976) 124; Gurval (1998) 169.

⁵² Oft-cited discussions of this are Wyke (1989) 165–73; Kennedy (1993) 1–23.

communication with an absent or unattainable addressee, the modes and sub-genres of elegy matching closely the varieties of absence. In the *paraclausithyron*, the lover in the street speaks, as if audibly, to the beloved immured within the house. In the *propempticon* words are cast across a real or imagined distance, typically from the land across the shore and out to sea (as in Prop. 2.26c). Geographical separation underpins many elegiac situations in which Propertius is apart from Cynthia (1.8, 1.11, 1.12, 1.17, 2.19, 2.26a, 3.16), Tibullus from Nemesis (2.3), and Sulpicia from Cerinthus (Tib. 3.14–15). Arethusa (in Prop. 4.3) is enduring a prolonged separation from her husband Lycotas who is away at war. The same condition of anxiety-filled absence lies behind the whole branch of epistolary poetry in elegiacs (as in Ovid's *Heroides*). Sickness also enforces isolation, a situation favored especially by Tibullus and his circle (1.3; 1.5.9–20; 3.5 Lygdamus; 3.10 on Sulpicia; 3.17 Sulpicia; and Prop. 3.17). Messages cross from immortals to mortals: Priapus addresses Tibullus in 1.4; Apollo and Calliope address Propertius in 3.3; and vice versa as in Tibullus 2.1, 3.6 (Lygdamus), and Propertius 3.17. From the grave come words addressed to the living: Propertius 1.21, 4.7, 4.11; Tibullus 2.3.54–6, 2.6.33–40, 3.26–30 (Lygdamus). Conversely, the living address laments to the dead (as in Prop. 3.7 for Paetus and 3.18 for Marcellus). As Propertius states, *traicit et fati litora magnus amor* ("great love propels itself even across the shores of death," 1.19.12), a *sententia* that deftly fits out the rationale of the funeral elegy in the imagery of the *propempticon*.

Another kind of void across which words are flung is that created by vast differences in power, social status, and chosen manner of life, as between poet and politician or military leader. This social distance is usually accentuated by physical distance (as in Tib. 1.1, 1.3 and Prop. 3.4). Eventually Ovid discovers in the condition of banishment the perfect distancing elegiac situation, combining geographical with social and political disconnection. For this reason his *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* deserve recognition, rather than his more purely amatory works, as the rightful culmination of Roman elegy. The poems of Propertius and Tibullus that relate to Messalla, Maecenas or Augustus are not functionally divorced from their poems that relate to Cynthia, Delia or Nemesis. In all cases the addressee is (re)constructed for a role and the poet positions himself in a place separated from, and unable to share a life with, his subject. The poems are epitaphs for lost opportunities in love, in poetry, in career, and ideological assimilation. Elegies addressed to political magnates can no more be taken as implying a

reconciliation with the current political powers than the funeral elegies spoken by or to the dead (like Prop. 4.7) can be taken to imply reconciliation with mortality. In both cases what is commemorated is the speaker's ineradicable sense of being sequestered permanently in a different world.⁵³

⁵³ The author wishes to acknowledge with gratitude the help of James Townshend in the preparation of this chapter.

CHAPTER NINE

POLITICS IN OVID

Gareth Williams

To limit the theme of “politics in Ovid” to the nature of his relationship to Augustus, Augustanism and the institution of the principate may indeed be to exclude or play down significant factors, be they connected to class-structure or imperialist policy, gender-relations or cultural identity, in the complex fabric of Roman political life as a whole;¹ and yet no account of “politics in Ovid” can escape the Augustan shadow that will predominate in the limited space available here. The opposition that long tended to be drawn between pro- and anti-Augustan readings of Ovid has given way in recent scholarship to a less polarizing approach—but not one that retreats into a passive neutrality, or an apolitical non-Augustanism, as if the political traffic of the text comes to a standstill in the gridlock of the possible pro- and anti-Augustan implications of his verse. The more nuanced approach that has gained ground in recent years is to stress Augustus’ significance not as a person but as an idea, his power not static and immanent within him but relying on his exploitation of external energies. As Kennedy puts it, his power was “a collective invention, the symbolic embodiment of the conflicting desires, incompatible ambitions and aggressions of the Romans, the instrumental expression of a complex network of dependency, repression and fear.”² “Augustanism” was not an ideology invented by a few and imposed on a passive audience from above,³ but a collective Roman experience, for Barchiesi “an all-embracing discourse, which is able to take over and transform to its own ends the resources of the collective imagination.”⁴ Whether in his rebuilding program, his moral reforms or his intervention in Rome’s religious and ritual life, “Augustus” was an all-penetrating presence and phenomenon, Augustan ideology “a whole

¹ Now Habinek (2002) 55–7.

² Kennedy (1992) 35.

³ To follow Feeney (1992) 3.

⁴ Barchiesi (1997) 8.

way of thought, a total value system”⁵ which appealed to “notions of continuity, stability, fixity—the *urbs aeterna*.”⁶

But the tension that Hardie explores between this “ideology of permanence” and the memory of violent upheaval in the last decades of the republic⁷ exemplifies the broader strain carried by Augustan discourse as a constant state of negotiation between past and present. Even as the new regime brought stability of a kind, Augustus hovered ambiguously between imperial and republican images of authority; the splendors of the new Rome vied with the Augustan emphasis on the moral values of *paupertas* (“poverty”) and modest living; and however much Augustus insisted on his allegiance to Roman tradition, Feeney well captures the mood of the Roman moment in stating that “it was (and is) always possible to concentrate on the ways in which he was an anomaly, a novelty, a challenge to Roman powers of definition, occupying novel, uncategorisable conceptual areas.”⁸ From this perspective any neat distinction between politics and literature collapses before Augustus’ presence in Ovid’s verse not as a fixed commodity but as a fluid object of *representation*,⁹ of controversy; at issue is not whether Ovid is pro- or anti-Augustan, but the extent to which he captures the complexity of Augustus as a floating signifier,¹⁰ an idea always in development. In any given passage or work the different implications of Ovid’s treatment of Augustus, some loyal and flattering, others not, thus construct the problem that *is* Augustus: the balancing of perspectives is no mere game of innuendo, or the sly play of a poet indifferent to the “serious” politics of the age, but necessary for capturing the elusiveness that is *essential* to the nature of Augustus. In this respect Myers rightly stresses Ovid’s “profound engagement with the regime’s whole programme, his insistent probings of the very underpinnings of its authority” and “his deep understanding of the transformative nature of Augustus’ manipulations of culture, power, and identity”;¹¹ Ovid writes not for or against but *about*¹² Augustus and Augustan Romanness, and to privilege

⁵ Wallace-Hadrill (1987) 223.

⁶ Hardie (1992) 61.

⁷ Hardie (1992) 61.

⁸ Feeney (1992) 2.

⁹ Cf. Barchiesi (1997) 43–4 for Augustus as “a subject for representation rather than as the symbolic ‘main addressee’ of the poetic act.”

¹⁰ Barchiesi (1997) 255: he was “a shifting signifier...difficult to pin down.”

¹¹ Myers (1999) 197.

¹² Cf. Feeney (1992) 6.

one reading over another is potentially to iron out or remove from the text a basic challenge with which it grapples, the difficulty of “fixing” Augustus. And these Ovidian tensions may also be felt as a reaction to the sheer exhaustiveness of Augustan discourse, where “[a]ll aspects of Roman life are involved: sacrifices, religious cults, horoscopes, processions, coins, pottery, funerals, games, inaugurations.... The more closely woven our discursive fabric becomes, the greater is our need for poetry, whose signifiers are so difficult to pin down.”¹³ The ambivalences of Ovid’s texts resist the totalizing tendencies of, and the movement towards fixity of authority in, Augustan discourse.

Augustus himself of course changed, and so too did Roman reaction to him, between 30 BCE and 14 CE; a synchronic view of the Augustan age easily misleads in this respect.¹⁴ So in the matter of his vaunted tolerance: Feeney locates most of the evidence for his *comitas* (“affability”) in the middle period between Actium and the disgrace and banishment of his daughter, the elder Julia, in 2 BCE,¹⁵ but the picture (as Feeney shows) is far from unambiguous even in that period, before the gradual narrowing of the limits of free speech that Feeney discerns in Augustus’ later years. Allowance for this shifting of attitude may explain why Ovid was punished by exile only belatedly, in 8 CE, for the alleged offensiveness of his *Ars Amatoria*, some eight or nine years (and perhaps more)¹⁶ after its publication. Or were the politics and tone of his erotic elegiac corpus conditioned by an Ovidian “reading” of Augustus’ tolerance that took too many liberties and proved in retrospect to be disastrously misguided?¹⁷ An overview of “politics in Ovid” begins in the first section below with the political provocation, the knowing flamboyance and riskiness, of his erotic elegy in the earlier phase of his literary career. We shall then turn in the second section to the *Fasti* and *Metamorphoses* (c. 2–8 CE), and in the third section to his exilic writings from bleak Tomis (modern Constanța on the Romanian coast of the Black Sea) after 8 CE. At issue in both the first and second sections are Ovid’s complex projection of, and response to, Augustan values and “meaning” in the later, darker phase of Augustus’ reign.

¹³ Barchiesi (1997) 11.

¹⁴ On this point: Newlands (1995) 9–10; Fantham (2002) 208.

¹⁵ Feeney (1992) 7.

¹⁶ See below, n. 31.

¹⁷ Cf. Feeney (1992) 4.

The Politics of Amor/Roma

Born in 43 BCE, Ovid belonged to a generation that came of age after the battle of Actium and the dawn of the Augustan era. True, the “mere institution of the *Pax Augusta* could not have removed at a stroke the factional hatred and bitterness which had tortured Rome for generations,”¹⁸ but Ovid was too young to know at first hand and through active service the horrors of the previous decades. In this respect the *Pax Augusta* “did not cause, but merely encouraged, the temperamental indifference to politics for which we have Ovid’s own testimony [cf. *Am.* 1.15.1–6, *Tr.* 4.10.33–40].”¹⁹ Moreover, if we accept that Ovid began writing the *Amores* in c. 26–25 BCE and published the first book(s) in c. 22–21,²⁰ he wrote in the years after the early efforts of Augustan reconstruction had established Augustus himself as a pervasive Roman institution. Against this background—Ovid coming of age in an era of (relative) peace, Augustus embedded as the inescapable symbol of the new Rome—the ironic flippancy that has long been detected in the *Amores* represents the youthful voice of non-conformity, a voice that is not crudely anti-Augustan but inevitably plays with (and against) the new values and conventions of Augustan discourse. “A light wash of fealty”²¹ imparted by his few references to Augustus (1.2.51–2, 2.14.17–8, 3.9.63–4, 3.12.15) may (narrowly) justify the inclusion of the *Amores* when Ovid claims, in exile, that *Caesareo... / non caret e nostris ullus honore liber* (“no book of mine lacks honor done to Caesar,” *Pont.* 1.1.27–8). But despite these encomiastic touches, elegy is inherently a genre of dissent,²² the life of *otium* (“leisure”) automatically in tension with the traditional claims of the Roman *cursus honorum*; and in the light of Augustus’ moral legislation, including the outlawing of adultery by the *lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis* of 18 BCE,²³ the timing of Ovid’s second edition of the *Amores* (c. 8/7 BCE),²⁴ now in three books as opposed to five, can hardly be considered tactful.

¹⁸ McKeown (1987) 31.

¹⁹ McKeown (1987) 31; cf. Habinek (2002) 46 on Ovid’s “generational difference” from Vergil, Horace and Propertius, and hence his different “political and social concerns.”

²⁰ So McKeown (1987) 75, 81–2, 84; full bibliography at 74 n. 1.

²¹ White (2002) 11.

²² On this point: Newlands (1995) 14.

²³ Background on the Augustan legislation: Gibson (2003) 25–37.

²⁴ Date: McKeown (1987) 84; White (2002) 10.

In *Amores* 3.1 the female personifications of Tragedy and Elegy speak in turn, the former urging Ovid's *persona* to forsake elegy, the latter winning the day in persuading him to persist with *teneri*... *Amores* ("tender loves," 3.1.69). The contest between these generic opposites not only replays in different guise the familiar Roman *recusatio*-formula that more usually rejects epic in favor of elegy;²⁵ it also gently evokes the familiar allegorical story of Hercules' choice between virtue and vice, a story recounted at length by "Socrates" in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (2.1.21–33), apparently after the sophist Prodicus.²⁶ Ovid rewrites the myth, however, by having Elegy prevail over Tragedy, "vice" over "virtue," and by provocatively casting both players as particular Roman types; for, as Wyke has it, "[i]n their appearance, their attire, and their pose, Elegia and Tragoedia are clearly differentiated as respectively *meretrix* and *matrona*,"²⁷ or as alluring Roman mistress and respectable Roman wife. Given the strong Herculean associations cultivated by the new regime, Ovid's *persona* itself also plays the misfit in Augustan Rome in making the "wrong," un-Herculean choice.²⁸ On this approach the "written women of this elegy are... to be read as signifiers of moral and political ideologies,"²⁹ but the effect here and often elsewhere in the collection is more provocative than subversive, as if Ovid casts himself as wryly standing apart from the solid, "official" conventions of the Augustan Rome to which he nevertheless so intimately belongs. True, in moments his provocations may appear sharp to the point of being reckless, as when he blithely portrays adultery as rife at Rome and implicates the illegitimacy of Romulus and Remus in the same time-honored fault:

rusticus est nimium, quem laedit adultera coniunx,
 et notos mores non satis Urbis habet,
 in qua Martigenae non sunt sine crimine nati
 Romulus Iliades Iliadesque Remus

(Ov. *Am.* 3.4.37–40)

A husband who's hurt when his wife commits adultery is much too provincial
 and isn't well enough acquainted with the ways of the city,

²⁵ Further: Wyke (2002) 141–5.

²⁶ Now Sansone (2004) 125–42; on Ovid's adaptation of Prodicus' tale here: Wyke (2002) 130–45.

²⁷ Wyke (2002) 132.

²⁸ On this point: Wyke (2002) 136–7.

²⁹ Wyke (2002) 136.

where [even] the sons of Mars were not born without reproach,
Romulus, Ilia's son, and Ilia's Remus.

Ovid's tone here would seem to be all the more risqué if we accept that 3.4 was a late poem, unlikely to have been written before the promulgation of the *leges Iuliae* in 18 BCE.³⁰ The message of 3.4.37–8 is, to say the least, out of step with that legislation, but 3.4 could yet be safely included in the second edition of the *Amores* that appeared after 18. But the climate had changed by the time when the *Ars Amatoria* and *Remedia Amoris* were published, between 2 BCE and 2 CE;³¹ it may or may not be the case that a (or *the*) major catalyst for change was supplied by the elder Julia's disgrace in 2 BCE.³²

In contrast to the *Amores*, Ovid's erotodidactic *persona* in the *Ars Amatoria* is on one level scrupulously careful to observe the limits and the letter of the Augustan moral legislation:

este procul, uittae tenues, insigne pudoris,
quaeque tegis medios instita longa pedes:
nos Venerem tutam concessaque furta canemus
inque meo nullum carmine crimen erit.
(Ov. *Ars Am.* 1.31–4)

Far off with you, slender matronly headbands, badge of modesty,
and the long skirt that covers the feet with its folds.
I shall sing of love free from risk, and of permitted liaisons,
and no cause for reproach will be found in my poem.

By such statements Ovid ostensibly makes the poem safe: "Having brought the *Ars* into compliance with the law, Ovid was satisfied that he had rendered it unobjectionable."³³ But on another level these statements are self-evidently problematic. When the exiled Ovid later defends himself against the charge that the *Ars Amatoria* is corrupting, he reproduces (albeit with a slight modification) at *Tristia* 2.247–50 the disclaimer of *Ars* 1.31–4: did he not expressly exclude from the *Ars Amatoria*, he writes to Augustus, all women of good character

³⁰ McKeown (1987) 28, (1998) 407.

³¹ Dating: Gibson (2003) 37–43. But for the possibility that *Ars Am.* 1 and 2 as they survive represent a second edition of a version that may have appeared well before 2 BCE: Syme (1978) 13–20 with Gibson (2003) 39 and n. 104.

³² Cf. McKeown (1987) 27 on this "untypically open and unrestrained show of force."

³³ White (2002) 13.

(*Tr.* 2.251–2)? But in formulating this argument he confronts Augustus with an all too literal reading (a reading that passes its own silent comment on Augustus’ literary sensibility?) that is devoid of all the irony and the parody of ritual procedure (*este procul...*) that so complicate the tone of the original disclaimer,³⁴ extending to the apparent oxymoron in *concessa...furta* (literally, “allowed *thefts*”?) and to the fact that, for all his insistence to the contrary, *crimen* does indeed lurk in (this) *carmine*.³⁵ More broadly, Ovid’s disclaimers merely reassert at significant intervals in the *Ars Amatoria* the Augustan moral standard that becomes the challenge and provocation for the initiated reader, who remains “in a state of constant alertness: will Ovid—or when will Ovid—break the spirit or letter of the law?”³⁶ There are signs that *matronae* (“wives”) are among the targets of erotic opportunity in the work;³⁷ his vague terminology (*uir*, “husband” or “lover”?) allows for the possibility that adultery *is* on the agenda,³⁸ and while many passages are coyly suggestive, he surely touches an especially raw nerve in drawing on the adulterous example of Mars’ affair with Venus (2.561–94)³⁹ to argue that a lover (or husband?) should endure a rival; for the cuckolded Vulcan’s experience shows that *crescit amor prensis* (“detection merely fans the flame of passion,” 2.559). Ovid shows typical sleight-of-hand in immediately qualifying any implication that he has adultery in mind here: let detection and exposure be left to lawfully wedded husbands (2.595–8), he proclaims, sternly bearing witness to the fact that *nihil hic nisi lege remissum / luditur* (“there is no sport here that breaks the law,” 2.599–600); but the damage has been done.

On this approach the *Ars Amatoria* is firmly rooted within (and in tension with) Augustan moral discourse, mischievously testing and straining the limits of the law while exuding an “urban hipness”⁴⁰ that is itself ambiguous in its political implications. In one way Ovid’s *persona* is thoroughly modern and “Augustan”:

³⁴ See Williams (1994) 206–8.

³⁵ On *furta* and *carmine*: Sharrock (1994) 111–2.

³⁶ Gibson (2003) 26–7.

³⁷ Cf. Watson (2002) 156.

³⁸ On ambiguous *uir*: Sharrock (1994) 112; Watson (2002) 156.

³⁹ Treated at length by Sharrock (1994) 113–7.

⁴⁰ White (2002) 12.

simplicitas rudis ante fuit; nunc aurea Roma est
 et domiti magnas possidet orbis opes.
 aspice, quae nunc sunt, Capitolia, quaeque fuerunt:
 alterius dices illa fuisse Iouis.

.....
 prisca iuuent alios, ego me nunc denique natum
 gratulor: haec aetas moribus apta meis,
 non quia nunc terrae lentum subducitur aurum...

.....
 sed quia cultus adest nec nostros mansit in annos
 rusticitas, priscis illa superstes auis.

(Ov. *Ars Am.* 3.113–16, 121–3, 127–8)

There was primitive plainness before, but now Rome is golden
 and possesses the great wealth of a world conquered.
 Look at the Capitol, what now it is, and what it was,
 and you'll say that they belonged to different Jupiters.

.....
 Let the old times give others delight. I'm thankful I wasn't born
 till now: this age well fits my nature,
 not because stubborn gold is now dragged out of the earth...

.....
 but because cultured refinement is a thing of our times, and the old
 rusticity has not remained down to our age, surviving our grandfathers.

Where other poets (cf. *alios*, 121)⁴¹ emphasize continuity between Rome old and new, her pristine values preserved and now enhanced in the Augustan golden age, Ovid stresses the *separation* of old from new. The effect is to expose and play on what Gibson well describes as “a disharmony in Augustan ‘ideology’.” Augustus’ pride... in his transformation of contemporary Rome from brick to marble did not necessarily sit easily with a longing, expressed in many of the writers associated with him, for the simplicity characteristic of early Rome.”⁴² A variation on this tension arises from Ovid’s vexed relationship with his didactic predecessors: while some scholars have argued for serious point in his allusive engagement with Lucretius’ *De Rerum Natura* and Vergil’s *Georgics*, many others have detected varying shades of parody,⁴³ including Ovid’s slick rejection of the rustic simplicity and idealization of the past that

⁴¹ Cf. Gibson (2003) 139: “*alios* may refer especially to Virgil, Tibullus and Propertius.”

⁴² Gibson (2003) 135; “disharmony” despite Labate (1984), arguing for a “modern” Ovidian *civiltà* that is in step with Augustan ideology and values (but cf. in response Watson (1988)).

⁴³ For opinions surveyed: Watson (2002) 146–7.

is evoked by the *Georgics* in particular; on this approach Ovid offers “a deliberate parody of the ideals and patriotism of Virgil’s poem.”⁴⁴ If a major emphasis in the *Georgics* is on the collective formation of Roman character and values, the *Ars Amatoria* appeals not to national or civic consciousness but to private self-interest. Hence the “privatization” of public space, as the familiar venues and hallowed monuments of Augustan Rome—colonnades, temples, theaters, law-courts, Circus *et cetera* (1.67–262)—become hunting grounds for the lover; and state occasions, such as the triumph that Ovid anticipates in celebration of Gaius Caesar’s victorious return from the east (1.205–28),⁴⁵ are similarly transformed into private opportunities for personal conquest. If the Augustan priority is service to Rome, the lover’s priority is to serve himself in Ovid’s new order.

The politics of Ovid’s elegiac corpus are further complicated if the Corinna of the *Amores* and the elusive *puella* of the first two books of the *Ars Amatoria* (to say nothing of the female audience envisaged in *Ars* 3) are seen to challenge settled Augustan perceptions of female identity and motherhood. While hardly the first Roman elegist to portray “an independent, sexually unrestrained, and dominating mistress,”⁴⁶ Ovid fluctuates in the role that his *persona* plays, whether as the passive lover tormented by his liberated mistress or as a dominating figure who controls and manipulates the female body in the text and reflects (or even critiques) Roman mercantilist and imperialist attitudes in portraying women as commodities of exchange.⁴⁷ The tension between these passive and more aggressive aspects of his *persona* is one of several factors that have deepened the discussion of gender politics in Ovid in recent scholarship. But if he is seen to undermine conventional Augustan attitudes on the gender and broader political fronts in the *Ars Amatoria* in particular, the work may yet offer an indirect endorsement of Augustan rule. For all its wit and sophistication, its many provocations ironically constitute it as (for Kennedy) “what-must-be-repressed,” so generating

⁴⁴ Barsby (1978) 21. On the impossibility of reading didactic poetry apolitically after the *Georgics*: Sharrock (1994) 106–9.

⁴⁵ Given Gaius’ death in 4 CE on his return from the east, from a *post euentum* standpoint Ovid’s projected triumph may seem an unfortunate (and glaringly unrevised) embarrassment. See further: Williams (1994) 185–6.

⁴⁶ Wyke (2002) 171.

⁴⁷ In general: Wyke (2002) 155–91; Sharrock (2002) with Myers (1999) 200–1. On the Ovidian lover’s deception and exploitation of women related to a Roman (mercantilist/imperialist) ideology of male domination and power: Greene (1998) 93–113.

from one viewpoint the “necessity” for an Augustus, and thereby consolidating his position as *curator legum et morum* (“the custodian of laws and manners”).⁴⁸

The Fasti and Metamorphoses

If Ovid came of age in a world made different by the first efforts of Augustan reconstruction, the Roman ritual calendar that he would have known as a boy also underwent great upheaval in the Augustan years.⁴⁹ The calendar had never been politically neutral. Through its festivals it reenacted the Roman past in a steady sequence of annual time (January 1, 2, 3, etc.) but without following a linear, historical chronology (i.e., festivals of different longevity / antiquity were interspersed within the calendar); it thus served in a flexible way “to define and delineate Roman power, Roman history and Roman identity.”⁵⁰ Together with the scholarly exegesis of its festivals, it offered “a pageant of what it was to be Roman,”⁵¹ but one transformed by the thirty additions that Augustus made to it in inscribing himself into the festival-year, either by the creation of new commemorative days or by the bestowal of a new significance on traditional days. His rewriting of Roman time thus made the calendar a powerful ideological instrument by which “Roman national identity became bound up with veneration of the imperial family and respect for the values that the family chose to promote.”⁵² This Augustan emphasis permeates Ovid’s treatment of the calendar in his *Fasti*, where his aetiological theme (*Tempora cum causis Latium digesta per annum / ...canam*, “The times arranged throughout the Latin year, and also their origins—of that I shall sing,” 1.1–2) immediately locates the work in the tradition of Callimachus’ *Aetia*⁵³ and conditions his *persona* as that of the earnest researcher delving into obscure Roman lore. In contrast to his flamboyance in the *Amores* and *Ars Amatoria*, however,

⁴⁸ Cf. Kennedy (1992) 45.

⁴⁹ Cf. Barchiesi (1997) 143.

⁵⁰ Beard (1987) 1.

⁵¹ Beard (1987) 12; cf. Feeney (1998) 123–33.

⁵² Newlands (1995) 12.

⁵³ See Miller (1991) 8–9; Newlands (2002) 202; for recent scholarly trends: Fantham (1995a) 367–78; Fantham (1995b) 42–59; and now Herbert-Brown (2002). The work is in six books, but (*Trist.* 2.549–52) was apparently written originally in twelve books, then disrupted by Ovid’s exile in 8 CE; for exilic revision: Fantham (1986); Gee (2000) 3 with updated bibliography.

his more modest *persona* in the *Fasti* may also be conditioned by the darker Augustan times in which it was composed (c. 2–8 CE) after the disgrace of the elder Julia,⁵⁴ times that indicate to some scholars that “the encomiastic passages in the poem are meant to be taken seriously, as an attempt by Ovid to ingratiate himself with the emperor.”⁵⁵

But the very calendrical form of the *Fasti* itself generates tensions that surely qualify this panegyric reading. On the one hand the poem follows a linear and continuous narrative sequence, with the narrator’s master voice connecting the disparate episodes that are recounted at length on particular festival days. On the other hand, however, the poem is fundamentally discontinuous in its staccato progress through the festival calendar and Rome’s ritual timetable, and in the potentially awkward juxtapositions, overlaps and omissions that result from Ovid’s careful editing of his festival (half-)year.⁵⁶ If Augustus imposed his own control over Roman time, then Ovid too rewrites and controls time to complicating political effect, a particularly striking example falling on the Ides of March at 3.523–710. On this most somber of days the juxtaposition of *Annae festum geniale Perennae* (“the jovial feast of Anna Perenna,” 3.523) and Ovid’s brief and (partially?) respectful commemoration of Julius Caesar’s assassination (3.697–710) can be interpreted in at least two ways, either as an innocent mixture of differing tones on this one day or as an unedifying mismatch of incompatible themes.⁵⁷ So also on, for example, the Nones of February, on the anniversary of Augustus’ accession to the title of *pater patriae* in 2 BCE, Ovid hails him as a “superior” Romulus in an elaborate syncretism of the two:

Romule, concedes: facit hic tua magna tuendo
moenia, tu dederas transilienda Remo.
te Tatius paruique Cures Caeninaque sensit,
hoc duce Romanum est solis utrumque latus;
tu breue nescioquid uictae telluris habebas,
quodcumque est alto sub Ioue, Caesar habet...
(Ov. *Fast.* 2.133–8)

⁵⁴ On this change: Newlands (1995) 18–9, (1996) 324 and n. 22.

⁵⁵ McKeown (1984) 176.

⁵⁶ On this (dis)continuity and the resulting “syntagmatic tensions”: Barchiesi (1997) 79–86.

⁵⁷ Different tendencies are reflected in McKeown (1984) esp. 173–4; Herbert-Brown (1994) 125–7; Newlands (1995) 61; Newlands (1996) esp. 333–7; Barchiesi (1997) 123–30; Fantham (2002) 198–9.

Romulus, you must give way: by defending them Caesar makes
 great your city walls; the walls you gave were such as Remus could
 leap over.
 Your strength was felt by Tatius, humble Cures and Caenina;
 under his leadership each region of the sun on either side is Roman.
 You possessed a trifling stretch of conquered land;
 all that exists beneath supreme Jupiter Caesar owns...

High praise indeed, with Romulus introduced through Augustan, not
 calendrical, necessity.⁵⁸ And yet "[h]ow much is praise of the *princeps*
 worth, when it is coupled with dispraise of the *princeps*' chosen ideologi-
 cal prototype?"⁵⁹ Then in *Fasti* 3 Romulus' successor, Numa, is portrayed
 as a very different figure:

principio nimium promptos ad bella Quirites
 molliri placuit iure deumque metu.
 inde datae leges, ne firmior omnia posset,
 coeptaque sunt pure tradita sacra coli.
 exiit feritas...

(Ov. *Fast.* 3.277–81)

At first the Quirites were too prone to war: it seemed good [to Numa]
 for them to be softened by law and through fear of the gods.
 Hence laws were given, that the stronger might not always have his way,
 and holy rites were handed down and began to be piously observed.
 Their savage nature was laid aside...

As Hinds demonstrates,⁶⁰ this Numa is incompatible with the "bel-
 licose primitive" that is Romulus in the *Fasti*. If Augustus would seek
 "to be a Romulus, but a Romulus who has many of the features of a
 Numa... that, in terms of Ovid's version of the Romulean prototype, is
 an impossibility. In the ideology of *Fasti* 3, to be a Romulus is by defini-
 tion to fail to be a Numa."⁶¹ Through their contrast and yet collusion
 within Ovid's calendrical structure, both Numa and Romulus pull in
 different Augustan directions, offering now a blueprint for enlightened
 rule (but does Augustus live up to Numa?), now gently undermining
 Augustus' appropriation of Romulus as an ideological prototype (does
 Ovid's Romulus in fact pejoratively color our view of Augustus?).

⁵⁸ On this point: Barchiesi (1997) 144.

⁵⁹ Hinds (1992) 133; cf. Wallace-Hadrill (1987) 228; Harries (1989) 166. But for a
 different approach, that Ovid's Romulus was less discrediting: Herbert-Brown (1994)
 43–63.

⁶⁰ Hinds (1992) 117–27.

⁶¹ Hinds (1992) 131–2; a complementary approach is in Barchiesi (1997) 174–7.

Ovid's reader is left to activate the potential suggestiveness of the juxtapositions and cross-calendrical contrasts of the sort just sampled in the case of Romulus and Numa, but also to be alert to the significance of omission and of subtly controversial inclusion in his *Fasti*. On 26 June, 4 CE Augustus officially adopted Tiberius as his heir, but Ovid curiously omits to commemorate the event in *Fasti* 6. In his notice for 25 June he has a drunken stargazer predict the movements of Orion (6.787–8) but fail to signal the main event on 26 June—an event, it transpires (6.789–90), that is *not* the Tiberian anniversary but the summer solstice,⁶² and a Tiberian omission that arguably supports Wallace-Hadrill's point that "Ovid's downfall was his failure to win over Tiberius, not Augustus."⁶³ In his celebration of the Lupercalia on 15 February Ovid reviews at length three possible explanations for why the priests run naked during the festival (2.283–380). In doing so he shows the judicious open-mindedness of the careful researcher, but with a provocative touch; for in treating the question at such length, he draws glaring attention to the nudity that Augustus apparently abolished when he revived the Lupercalia, not least because of sensitivities aroused by Antony's performance when, as one of the Luperci, he appeared *nudus, unctus, ebrius* ("naked, perfumed, and drunk," Cic. *Phil.* 3.12) in trying to crown Julius Caesar with a diadem.⁶⁴ Again, Ovid's control over what he includes and chooses to emphasize in his Lupercalia illustrates the ambiguity of a work that simultaneously looks in two directions, more and less "Augustan," and which consequently finds a suggestive programmatic symbol of doubleness in Janus' two-faced versatility when he appears, the first god in the work at 1.63–288.⁶⁵ This Janus-like poem also looks back to Ovid's erotic elegy and forward to his new role as an elegist in a "higher" register.⁶⁶ *Caesaris arma canant alii* ("Let others sing of Caesar's wars," 1.13): in rejecting the familiar epic associations of *arma* ("wars") here, Ovid stamps his *Fasti* as an elegiac work of peaceful aetiological learning, with the erotic associations of elegy naturally suiting the more playful aspects of, for example, his entries for the Agonalia in January and the Vestalia in

⁶² Further Newlands (1995) 221–2; Barchiesi (1997) 264–5. But for the mischievous potential of the omission played down: Herbert-Brown (1994) 229–33.

⁶³ Wallace-Hadrill (1987) 227.

⁶⁴ See further: Newlands (1995) 59–60; Fantham (2002) 218–9 and n. 59.

⁶⁵ See Hardie (1991) 62–4; Barchiesi (1991) 16–7, (1997) 230–1; Newlands (1995) 6–7.

⁶⁶ See Newlands (1995) 6.

June (cf. Priapus' foiled attempts on Lotis and Vesta at 1.391–440 and 6.319–48 respectively).⁶⁷ But Ovid's elegiac medium nevertheless strains to carry the Augustan weight that his overt patriotism places upon it (cf. *deficit ingenium, maioraque uiribus urgent*, "My genius fails me: the burden is too much for my strength," 2.123–6),⁶⁸ and the tension between the lascivious ("elegiac") tendencies of the work and the graver solemnity of his Augustan celebrations is itself ideologically complicating, with no resolution to the conflict between what Wyke (on Propertius 4) characterizes as "the poetics of *Roma* and *amor*."⁶⁹

For certain scholars the *Fasti* signals increasing disillusionment with the imperial regime,⁷⁰ and also implicit protest if, in exile, parts were rewritten to make it "read like a poem whose *licentia* has been suppressed," its unfinished state "a mute reproach to the constraints set upon the poet's speech."⁷¹ But its other voice, overtly loyal and eulogistic, is at the same time essential to its problematic politics: "without its official voice, without addressees who will accept it, the poem is an abortive game,"⁷² failing to engage with the range and multi-faceted complexity of Augustan discourse. A similar balancing of voices can also be discerned in the *Metamorphoses*, where time is again an important structuring principle, albeit now following a linearity *prima...ab origine mundi / ad mea...tempora* ("from the origin of the world down to my own times," 1.3–4).⁷³ Ovid's incidental allusions to Augustus in book 1 (176, 204, 562) and then his crowning portrayal of Julius Caesar's apotheosis and his praises of Augustus in book 15 (745–870) may suggest an Augustan frame for the poem; but for the most part its loose structure, anachronisms, shifting narrative voices and erratic temporal movement within the mythical past disrupt any pretence of chronological linearity, even in the more 'historical' parts of the third pentad. This intrinsic fluidity of movement necessarily affects political

⁶⁷ On which: Fantham (1983); Fantham (2002) 228–9.

⁶⁸ For the wider generic tensions explored: Hinds (1992) 81–116 with Newlands (1995) 12–6 and Harrison (2002) 85–6; cf. Barchiesi (1997) 23: the reader is "no longer quite sure where—in what sector of regular literature—he has ended up."

⁶⁹ Wyke (2002) 83.

⁷⁰ See Newlands (1995) 18, 175–208.

⁷¹ Feeney (1992) 15, 19; for exilic rewriting, see above, n. 53.

⁷² Barchiesi (1997) 252.

⁷³ *Ad mea tempora* ("to my own times," 1.4) provocatively makes Ovid's own time and triumph (cf. 15.871–9) the *telos* of the *Metamorphoses*, as opposed to the Augustan *telos* tactfully envisaged in the *Tristia* (*in tua deduxi tempora, Caesar, opus*, "I spun the work down to your times, Caesar," *Tr.* 2.559–60); see now Feeney (1999) 13; Hinds (1999) 51.

readings of the *Metamorphoses*, qualifying or undermining hard pro- and anti-Augustan positions⁷⁴ by offering (as in the *Fasti*) a middle way.

Late in book 14 Ovid recounts the circumstances leading to the apotheosis first of Aeneas (581–608) and later of Romulus (805–28); this partly in preparation for Caesar’s catasterism and Ovid’s anticipation of Augustus’ apotheosis late in book 15 (745–870). In the Forum of Augustus, dedicated in 2 BCE, the statues of Aeneas and Romulus stood opposite each other in the two exedras on either side of the temple of Mars Ultor, in the *cella* of which a statue of Caesar stood beside those of Mars and Venus. If, with Garth Tissol, Ovid’s portrayal of Aeneas and Romulus is read against the statuary that stood in the Forum of Augustus, “the tightly regulated context of meanings” in the Forum makes for an “interpretive transparency” there that is compromised in the “Ovidian flux” of the *Metamorphoses*;⁷⁵ for the shafts of humor and of ironic possibility that Tissol detects in Ovid’s treatment of Aeneas and Romulus instantly complicate the tone—respectful or mischievous?—of both apotheoses. So in the case of Julius Caesar at 15.745–851, where Ovid’s overtly flattering treatment of father and son, Caesar and Augustus,⁷⁶ is again shot through with what may or may not be read as troubling innuendo. Praise of Caesar allows still greater praise of Augustus:

neque enim de Caesaris actis
ullum maius opus, quam quod pater exstitit huius.
scilicet aequoreos plus est domuisse Britannos...

.....
et multos meruisse, aliquos egisse triumphos,
quam tantum genuisse uirum.

(Ov. *Met.* 15.750–2, 757–8)

For of Caesar’s achievements no accomplishment is greater
than this, that he found glory as the father of this man [Augustus].
It should evidently be thought a greater thing to have tamed the sea-girt
Britons...

.....
and to have celebrated several triumphs and earned many,
than to have fathered so great a man!

⁷⁴ For a convenient summary of modern political readings: Myers (1994) 130–1 and n. 156.

⁷⁵ Tissol (2002) 312–3.

⁷⁶ On whom: Feeney (1991) 218–9.

As Hinds acutely observes, *scilicet* (“evidently”) is delicately poised here, simultaneously endorsing and denying the proposition that Caesar’s fathering of Augustus was a greater achievement than his impressive conquests: “Evident absurdity; or evident truth?”⁷⁷ The question defies firm answer, and as such it suitably floats in the provisional, ever changeable world of the *Metamorphoses*. True, Ovid’s “epic” may share with Vergil’s *Aeneid* shades of political ambivalence; but what crucially distinguishes this challenging answer to the *Aeneid* is its lack of a firm Vergilian/epic teleology and sense of movement towards a fate-driven Augustan point of arrival. Fate in the *Metamorphoses* is rather “an historical prop,” “part of the furniture of historized myth” in Ovid’s discontinuous poem.⁷⁸ If his deliberate use of anachronism is at odds with the “official” order of chronological efficiency and power under Augustus, introducing “uncertainty and disorder instead into the teleological structure of the ‘Age of Augustus’,”⁷⁹ the intrusion of foreign generic elements in the “impure epic” of the *Metamorphoses* also implies what Rosati characterizes as “the abandonment of [epic’s] totalizing pretenses, and of the character of absolute ‘truth’ that epic innately possesses.”⁸⁰

Relativism and change thus displace the sense of history that drives the *Aeneid*, challenging Augustan confidence: “In a world in which everything is transformed, there is no place for any permanence, neither *imperium sine fine* (*Aen.* 1.279) nor *Capitoli immobile saxum* (*Aen.* 9.448).”⁸¹ Hence Ovid’s appeal to a familiar poetic topos⁸² barely disguises the provocative effect of his epilogue, predicting the permanence of this work *quod nec Iouis ira nec ignis / nec poterit ferrum nec edax abolere vetustas* (“which neither Jupiter’s wrath nor fire, neither the sword nor the destructive toll of the years will be able to destroy,” 15.871–2; cf. *uiuam!*, “I shall live!”, 879). Everything, even Augustan “certainties,” are made vulnerable in the *Metamorphoses* to the great Ovidian flux; the crowning irony is his own defiance of that irrepressible force.

Earlier in the *Metamorphoses* Actaeon is punished for inadvertently stumbling upon the scene of Diana bathing with her attendant nymphs

⁷⁷ Hinds (1988) 25; the point stands if (now with Tarrant (2004) 476) *scilicet...uirum* is instead read as a question (cf. *OLD scilicet* 3b).

⁷⁸ Tissol (2002) 309.

⁷⁹ Rosati (2002) 280 after esp. Feeney (1999).

⁸⁰ Rosati (2002) 281.

⁸¹ Rosati (2002) 282.

⁸² Nisbet and Rudd (2004) 367 on Hor. *Carm.* 3.30.

(3.138–252). Transformed into a stag and killed by his own hounds, he pays a cruel penalty for what Ovid explicitly introduces as his innocent error:

at bene si quaeras, Fortunae crimen in illo,
non scelus inuenies: quod enim scelus error habebat?
(Ov. *Met.* 3.141–2)

But if you look carefully into the matter, you will find in him a chance
misdeed,
not an intentional crime: for how can inadvertent error be called a
crime?

After Actaeon's death, opinion was apparently divided:

aliis uiolentior aequo
uisa dea est, alii laudant dignamque seuera
uirginitate uocant; pars inuenit utraque causas.
(Ov. *Met.* 3.253–5)

To some the goddess seemed more violent
than fair; others praised her and hailed her as fully living up to
her rigid maidenhood. Both sides found good reason for their judgment.

If we incline towards viewing Actaeon as an innocent victim of divine pique,⁸³ he is one of multiple figures in the *Metamorphoses* whose treatment at the hands of the gods poses hard questions about the fairness or otherwise of divine justice. Several of those figures are artists, prominent among them Arachne, transformed into a spider by Minerva after arrogantly challenging the goddess to a contest of weaving (6.1–145).⁸⁴ In contrast to the austere images of the gods and the all too ominous representations of divine punishment on Minerva's tapestry (6.70–102), Arachne shows a lighter, irreverent touch in picturing the many seductions perpetrated by the gods in metamorphic disguise (6.103–28).⁸⁵ Minerva's violent response to Arachne's finished tapestry (6.129–38) is driven by an ambiguous mixture of personal jealousy and divine outrage at mortal disrespect, while Arachne is partly the victim of her all too enviable talents, partly of her lack of "proper" deference to the gods. In Arachne's case, and also those of (for example) Marsyas, flayed alive by Apollo in the aftermath of their pipe-contest (6.383–400), or the daughters of Pierus, changed into loquacious *picae* ("magpies") after

⁸³ So Galinsky (1975) 66.

⁸⁴ Much discussed: Feeney (1991) 190–4, 203–4 with 190 n. 8 for bibliography, adding Harries (1990) 64–82; now Rosati (1999) 248–52; Oliensis (2004) 286–96.

⁸⁵ On the contrast of implied poetics: Harries (1990) 69–76; Feeney (1991) 191–2.

being defeated in their poetic contest with the Muses (5.294–678), the theme of the artist persecuted by the gods suggests that Ovid “saw the real-world potential for an analogous silencing of artists by the Olympians’ mortal counterparts in Rome long before AD 8.”⁸⁶ Cruelly silenced by Diana so that he can never tell of seeing her naked (cf. 3.192–3), Actaeon offers but one example of speechlessness imposed as punishment in the *Metamorphoses*. Could it be that “the predominance of transformations involving voice loss . . . reflects any imperial disapproval that Ovid may have been sensing during the poem’s composition,” or that such scenes tacitly convey an “increasing sensitivity to the precarious position of any creative artist under a totalitarian regime?”⁸⁷ And given his own fate at the hands of Augustus, the (in)justice of the gods in the *Metamorphoses* offers a powerful, if coincidental, reason why the exiled Ovid should indeed continue to find in the work “a reminder of me” (cf. *admoneant . . . mei*, *Tr.* 1.7.26);⁸⁸ by his own account, after all, he resembles a second Actaeon (cf. *Tr.* 2.105–8), guilty only of *error*.

The Politics of Exile

Ovid’s reluctance to name his addressees in his five-book *Tristia*, written in the earlier phase of his exile (8–13 CE), not only underscores “the tragic metamorphosis that defines life in Tomis” by dramatizing “how exile has jammed the works of *amicitia*,”⁸⁹ it also projects on to (the tyranny of) Augustan Rome an atmosphere of anxiety and fear, as if caution is the byword in such dangerous times. How will the personified poetic book that Ovid sends back to Rome in *Tristia* 1.1 be received? It is to tread carefully, cautious in whom it talks to and what it says (17–22), and alert to the vagaries of mood and moment that might affect Augustus’ response to it should it reach his hands (93–104). On this reserved approach Augustus emerges as an elusive figure whose reputation for clemency and mildness (e.g., *neque enim moderatior alter*, “no one shows greater restraint,” *Tr.* 1.9.25; cf. 2.43–50) is tested and increasingly strained by every new Ovidian appeal for his removal from

⁸⁶ Johnson (1997) 243; cf. also Harries (1990) 76–7; Keith (1992) 135–6.

⁸⁷ Forbis (1997) 248.

⁸⁸ Adduced by Harries (1990) 77.

⁸⁹ Oliensis (1997a) 178.

Tomis: Ovid's exilic *persona* relies on Augustus as his only possible savior, and yet he also casts him in a mixed light that is obscured in modern scholarly responses that tend either to characterize the *Tristia* and the later four-book collection of *Epistulae ex Ponto* as an extended exercise in imperial flattery, or to stress instead the subversive hints that underlie Ovid's superficial posturings.⁹⁰ A more balanced approach to the politics of the exilic poetry finds in his construction of Augustus the same ambivalences that characterize the rest of Ovid's divided existence in Tomis as a poet between two worlds.

Contrary to the "official" version of a world dominated by Rome (cf. *de te pendentem sic dum circumspicis orbem*, "while you [Augustus] gaze upon the world that depends on you," *Tr.* 2.217), and contrary to Augustus' own projection in his *Res Gestae* of his successes in the general region of Ovid's exile (31.2), the poet knows a very different "reality" on the imperial margins:

uix hac inuenies totum, mihi crede, per orbem,
 quae minus Augusta pace fruatur humus.
 (Ov. *Pont.* 2.5.17–8)

Believe me, you'll scarcely find throughout the whole world
 a land which enjoys the Augustan peace less than this land.

Had Augustus known what life was really like on the Pontic shore, Ovid insists, he would never have exiled the poet to so desolate a region (*Pont.* 1.2.71–88). So much for Augustus' divine reach; *nescit enim Caesar, quamuis deus omnia norit, / ultimus hic qua sit condicione locus* ("for, although a god knows everything, Caesar has no notion of what life is like in this remote place," *Pont.* 1.2.71–2). A centripetal, Rome-based approach to Ovid's portrayal of the relation between the imperial center and margins arguably finds that he engages the reader "in the project of Roman imperialism."⁹¹ When in *Epistulae ex Ponto* 4.13 Ovid claims to have recited a poem written in Getic and set to Latin meter on the apotheosis of Augustus, winning the acclaim of his enthusiastic local audience, his achievement has (for Thomas Habinek) imperialist overtones; for "Ovid's poetry thus embodies in its implied personal narrative a political narrative as well, one that must have been familiar in many communities as Rome sought not merely to conquer but also to

⁹⁰ For bibliography on both sides: Williams (2002) 368 and n. 106.

⁹¹ Habinek (1998) 152; cf. also (2002) 59.

tame the far reaches of her empire.”⁹² From a Tomis-based viewpoint, however, Ovid’s Getic poem conveys a very different image of Augustus, and one that replaces a Rome-centered picture of global domination with a vision of uneasy accommodation with (and hardly conquest of) the Getic peoples. And just how flattering is it to envisage Augustus celebrated in “barbarian,” Getic words and applauded by an audience of grisly, quiver-bearing locals, one of whom takes the emperor to task for keeping so loyal a poet-subject in wretched exile (*Pont.* 4.13.37–8)? Beyond the stinging implications of this unlikely scene,⁹³ Ovid’s gestures of loyal deference towards Augustus are to be weighed more broadly in the exilic poetry against the disconcerting consequences of his privileged vantage-point in Tomis: he is ironically empowered either by his “true” insight into the grim realities underlying Augustan imperial pretension, or by the opportunity to promote one myth (the Getics scarcely under Roman control) in qualification of another (the boundlessness of Augustan imperial domination).

There are flashes of sharper defiance, such as when Ovid insists that Augustus is powerless to control his freedom of mind and poetic talent in exile (cf. *Tr.* 3.7.47–8); his very act of writing in Tomis may itself be viewed as a mode of resistance by which he “asserts and justifies himself in the face of his smothering catastrophe, vindicating his right to speak, maintaining his voice.”⁹⁴ But his sharpest challenge is mounted in his defense of the *Ars Amatoria* in *Tristia* 2, an elaborate address to Augustus himself, but perhaps scarcely meant actually to reach him;⁹⁵ for much of Ovid’s innuendo touches a raw Augustan nerve, not least when he argues that, given Augustus’ onerous responsibilities, it is hardly surprising that the emperor has never read the *Ars Amatoria* (2.237–8). But then why was the work condemned? Again, he maintains in his own defense that his life is pure, only his muse *iocosa* (“playful,” 2.354), that the greater part of his writings is *mendax . . . et ficta* (“unreal and fictitious,” 2.355), and that *nec liber indicium est animi* (“a book is no index of character,” 2.357); in which case he has no way of proving, and Augustus perhaps good reason to doubt, that Ovid’s vaunted praises

⁹² Habinek (1998) 161.

⁹³ Further: Casali (1997) 92–6.

⁹⁴ Feeney (1992) 18.

⁹⁵ Wiedemann (1975) 271.

of the emperor elsewhere in his oeuvre, apparently pledges of his good faith (2.65–6), are in fact sincerely meant. Then there is Ovid's most elaborate argument: although he is hardly the only poet to have written on "tender love," he alone has been persecuted for doing so (2.361–2). What follows (2.363–470) is an informal history of Greco-Roman literature,⁹⁶ with Ovid's relentless demonstration along the way that no work—be it the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*, Ennius' *Annales* or Lucretius' *De Natura Rerum* (2.423–6; cf. 259–62)—is without its salacious component. Part of the effect of Ovid's argument is to construct a long history of literary production that vastly overshadows (and belittles?)⁹⁷ Augustus' localized efforts to regulate literary morality. But if an automatic objection is that Ovid perversely reduces (for example) the *Iliad* to a mere love-story (cf. *Ilias ipsa quid est aliud nisi adultera, de qua / inter amatorem pugna uirumque fuit?*, "the very *Iliad*—what is it but [the case of] an adulteress over whom her lover and her husband fought?" 2.371–2),⁹⁸ one response is that his own vast "misreading" of literature here is designed to exemplify the very lack of proportion and balanced judgment that has condemned the *Ars Amatoria*. In effect, Ovid defends the *Ars* in the *reductio ad absurdum*⁹⁹ of *Tristia* 2 by deploying an "Augustan" mode of (mis-)reading, a tactic that arguably makes that defense as politically mischievous and provocative as the *Ars* itself.

In many ways the mingling of different voices, deferential and subtly defiant, in *Tristia* 2 is typical of the ambivalence that characterizes so much of Ovid's treatment of Augustus and Augustanism throughout his oeuvre. From the *Amores* onwards his works reveal an intimate engagement with the nuances and the ironies, the ideals and the "realities," of Augustan discourse. When the fixed polarities of pro- and anti-Augustan readings of Ovid are adjusted so that both recede into the flux that was that discourse, we perhaps arrive at a more properly balanced view of "politics in Ovid," even as the Augustan phenomenon itself becomes entrapped and manipulated in *Ovidian* discourse. Indeed, could it be that it was not (just) Ovid's specific *carmen et error* (*Tr.* 2.207)—the *Ars Amatoria* and his notoriously elusive "misdemeanour"—that caused his

⁹⁶ On which: Gibson (1999) 27–34.

⁹⁷ Cf. Williams (2002) 372.

⁹⁸ There are interesting remarks in Gibson (1999) 29.

⁹⁹ Wilkinson (1955) 311.

downfall, but the persistent challenge and provocation that his writings cumulatively posed to Augustan values? If so, Ovid's exilic poetry gives literal manifestation to a pose and tendencies long discernible in his works: in significant respects he had always been an Augustan "outsider" within.

CHAPTER TEN

BORROWED PLUMES: PHAEDRUS' FABLES, PHAEDRUS' FAILURES

Victoria Jennings

quam dulcis sit libertas breuiter proloquar.
(Phaed. 3.7.1)
Let me speak out briefly about how sweet freedom is.
The fable is a trap, and you are an animal...¹

Introduction

Phaedrus writes in a period when speaking out, even briefly, could prove catastrophic.² He suggests that his own choices sparked a prosecution by Sejanus but, despite this calamity, he will run the same risks. Consider his programmatic aetiology:

nunc, fabularum cur sit inuentum genus,
breui docebo. seruitus obnoxia,
quia quae uolebat non audebat dicere,
affectus proprios in fabellas transtulit,
calumniamque fictis elusit iocis.
(Phaed. 3 *prol.* 33–7)

Now, in brief, I'm going to teach you how the fable genre came about. The slave, liable to punishment, because he daren't say what he wanted to say, translated his state of mind into fables, and avoided malicious prosecution with made-up jests.

With first-hand access as *Augusti libertus* ("a freedman of Augustus"), it is not difficult to construct a Phaedrus who criticizes high level inequalities and injustices:

humiles laborant ubi potentes dissident.
(Phaed. 1.30.1)
The poor suffer when the mighty fall out.

¹ Keenan (1995) 141.

² C. 15 BCE–c. 50 CE: Perry (1965) lxxiii–cii; Currie (1984) 497–513.

in principatu commutando ciuium
 nil praeter dominum, non res mutant pauperes.
 (Phaed. 1.15.1–2)

When the first-ranked changes, nothing changes for the poor—except their master.

Moreover, Phaedrus *succeeds*: not another Sejanus/Tiberius statistic like Cremutius Cordus,³ he emerges as spokesman for Cordus' lost *libertas* ("freedom"):⁴

haec propter illos scripta est homines fabula
 qui fictis causis innocentes opprimunt.
 (Phaed. 1.1.14–5)

This fable was written on account of those men who oppress the innocent with made-up law-suits.

Phaedrus' *Fables* sizzle: the "borrowed plumes" (cf. 1.3: "suiting" Sejanus?);⁵ *amittit merito proprium qui alienum adpetit* ("he who seeks another's, rightly loses his own," 1.4.1); *numquam est fidelis cum potente societas* ("partnership with the mighty is never to be trusted," 1.5.1); *habent insidias hominis blanditiae mali* ("evil men's flatteries are a trap," 1.19.1). Read rightly (= wrongly), this is exciting (= relevant) stuff:⁶

contra potentes nemo est munitus satis;
 si uero accessit consiliator maleficus,
 uis et nequitia quicquid oppugnant ruit.
 (Phaed. 2.6.1–3)

Against the powerful, no one is protected enough: but if an evil-doing adviser is added, anything that violence and vileness might attack, will fall.

³ Suicide 25 CE: *uerba mea...arguuntur: adeo factorum innocens sum* ("my words accuse me—so innocent am I of deeds," Tac. *Ann.* 4.34–5); Cass. Dio 57.24.2–4; Sen. *Ad Marc.*; Suet. *Tib.* 61. Books burned, but re-released under Caligula: Suet. *Gaius* 16. Tiberius chastised Senators executing poet Clutorius Priscus over a (?) joke: *deprecaretur tam praecipitis uerborum poenas* ("so hasty punishment for words is to be deprecated," Tac. *Ann.* 3.51; cf. *dicta a maleficiis differunt*, "evil words differ from evil deeds," *Ann.* 3.49–51). See Forbes (1936) 114–25; Toynbee (1944) 43–58; Smith (1951) 169–79; Stewart (1953) 70–85; Rogers (1960) 19–23; Rogers (1965) 351–9; Bellemore (1992) 219–34.

⁴ Cordus' Tacitean "defense": *libertas* in speaking of dead, not *libertas* as anti-imperial "watchword"? Wirszubski (1950) 163–7: "merely the courage to keep one's *dignitas* alive."

⁵ Ogilvie (1980) 189; Currie (1984) 511. Hor. *Ep.* 1.3: plagiarism. Applicable to Phaedrus? Critic *quicquid putabit esse dignum memoria, / Aesopi dicet* ("will call Aesop's whatever bits he thinks worth keeping," 4.22.3–4); cf. *lector Cato* ("reader Cato"), in *colurnis prodit Aesopus* ("unhappy with Aesop in tragic footwear," 4.7.4).

⁶ Standard implications: Duff (1964) 114–6.

The frogs seek a “better” king but gain a *hydrus* (“water-snake”) *qui dente aspero / corripere coepit singulas* (“who began to attack, one by one, with savage fangs,” 1.2.24–5). Too frightened to speak (*uocem praeccludit metus*, 26), they send a message to Jove⁷ who replies, *quia nolulistis uestrum ferre, inquit, bonum, / malum perferte* (“since you wouldn’t suffer your good king, you can *really* suffer the bad one,” 29–30). At a thief’s wedding, “Aesop” narrates more frogs’ complaints—at the Sun’s betrothal:

nunc, inquit, omnes unus exurit lacus,
cogitque miseras arida sede emori.
quidnam futurum est si crearit liberos?

(Phaed. 1.6.7–9)

Now he’s the only one, and he dries up all the waters and compels us wretches to perish in dried-up homes. So what’ll happen if he has *children*?⁸

How do you survive a bent for socio-political cynicism?⁹ I will discuss five safety devices by which Phaedrus may deflect authorial culpability.

Phaedrus’ Safety

sibi non cauere et aliis consilium dare
stultum esse paucis ostendamus uersibus.

(Phaed. 1.9.1–2)

Let’s show in a few verses how stupid it is to give advice to others and not take care of yourself.

⁷ *Corripere* (“bring to trial,” Tac. *Ann.* 12.42). About established dynastic succession (Henderson [2001] 187–91) or warning ruler at *Villa Iouis* about prospective regents? Succession: Boddington (1963) 1–16. Sejanus as *ferox* (“savage,” *Ann.* 4.12.2); Harrison (1994) 557–9. Gaius’ *ferum ingenium* (“savage intellect”)—Tiberius (the *paterfamilias*, but not *pater patriae*: Suet. *Tib.* 26, 67) reared *natrrix* (“water-snake”) for Rome: Suet. *Gaius* 11. Cass. Dio 58.13.1–2; cruelty of Tiberius’ Drusus. Compare the *paterfamilias* warned by Aesop of *ferox* son: *feroque ingenium comprimis clementia, / uide ne querela maior accrescat domus* (“take care that you should restrain his unbridled nature with your mildness, in case a greater occasion for complaint arises in your house,” *App.* 12.13–4). “Father,” linchpin of cultural order: Fowler (1996) 35–44; Stevenson (1992) 423. *Clementia* under Tiberius: Sutherland (1938) 129–40; Burgess (1972) 339–49; Cooley (1998) 199–212.

⁸ King/Sun: *Life of Aesop* 114–5 (Perry [1952] 70–1, 102–3). Criticism applies to Sejanus (thief/son: royal wedding plans: Tac. *Ann.* 4.39–40; Currie (1984) 511) and emperor *unus* (“the only one”)—let alone *liberi* (“children”: etymologically significant?)

⁹ “Strikingly cynical”: Baldwin (1982) 72. *Demetrius rex* seizes Athens; leading citizens *ipsi principes / illam osculantur qua sunt oppressi manum, / tacite gementes tristem fortunae uicem* (“silently bemoaning their dismal change of fortune, kissed the hand by which they had been oppressed,” 5.1.3–6).

Genus Fabularum

Phaedrus' re-clothing of Aesop's Greek prose fables in Latin verse is a master stroke. Fable is the medium *par excellence* for encoding deceptive commentary: *mutato nomine de te / fabula narrator* ("with a name-change, the *fabula* is about YOU," Hor. *Sat.* 1.1.69–70).¹⁰ Dressing subversive speech act in entertaining beast-tale cloaks overt criticism:

suspicione si quis errabit sua,
et, rapiens ad se quod erit commune omnium,
stulte nudabit animi conscientiam,
huic excusatum me uelim nihilo minus.
neque enim notare singulos mens est mihi,
uerum ipsam uitam et mores hominum ostendere.
(Phaed. 3 *prol.* 45–50)

If there's anyone who'll go astray in his own suspicions and seizing upon for himself what is common to all, foolishly will expose his own bad conscience, I should like him to exempt me from blame. For my thought was not to censure individuals, but to reveal life itself and men's ways.

The fable is structured as a double bind: to heed its call you must ignore its call, you must make the mistake the fable denounces. In order to read, you must not read, and you cannot choose not to read.¹¹

Fable offers an alternative to frank criticism—a privileged space which renders *safe* the politicized discourse of blame between those unequally empowered (slave/master, subject/tyrant).¹² Like "figured speech" in oratory, fable's mechanized deniability undoes "someone," *never YOU*:¹³ *non semper ea sunt quae uidentur* ("they're not always what they seem," 4.2.5).

... the speaker or writer himself stands back. He is safe because the critical links in thought must be established by his reader or listener: the text is incomplete until the audience completes the meaning.¹⁴

¹⁰ See Patterson (1991) 1–20; Keenan (1997) 45–69.

¹¹ Keenan (1997) 66; Nagy (1990) 148. 3 *prol.*: *legere si desideras*... ("if you wish to read," 1), *legesne* ("will you read/choose," 10), *quem si leges*... ("if you'll read," 31), *induxi te ad legendum?* ("have I persuaded you to read?" 62).

¹² *Nolo irascaris, libere si dixero* ("don't get angry if I speak freely," 4.21.14); *App.* 17: free-speaking slave flogged.

¹³ Keenan (1997) 57; Gelley (1995b) 152. You "view...from a different perspective—that of the narrator": Hansen (1998) 260. Cf. convenient τις ("someone") of Greek fable: Babrius 22.

¹⁴ Ahl (1984a) 187.

exemplis continetur Aesopi genus.
nec aliud quicquam per fabellas quaeritur
quam corrigatur error ut mortalium.

(Phaed. 2 *prol.* 1–3)

The Aesopic genre comprises *exemplae*. Nor is anything else sought by fables other than that the mistakes of men may be corrected.

Fabulae, Ioci

Aesop was ὁ λογοποιός—“a wordsmith”: the *Life of Aesop* abundantly demonstrates his verbal slipperiness.¹⁵ Like ὁ λόγος, *fabula* embraces polysemous shiftiness.¹⁶ Neither is self-evident; both possess an implicitly protective fictitiousness¹⁷ which Phaedrus couples with “jesting”: *fictis iocari nos meminerit fabulis* (“may no one forget that I jest with made-up ‘stories’,” 1 *prol.* 7). “What is at issue is the double track of all didactic narrative—part story to be interpreted and enjoyed, part address, to be responded to.”¹⁸ Aesop-*fabulator* (“story-teller/fabulist”) is wise because *non seuerè neque imperiose praecepit et censuit, ut philosophis mos est, sed festiuos delectabilesque apologos commentus* (“he instructed and advised not austere and imperiously (like philosophers), but contrived good-humored and delightful fables,” Gell. *NA* 2.29.1).

One tells *ioci* (“jokes”; cf. 3.8.7) *pueriliter ludentes* (“at childish play,” 3.8.5): *iocularè tibi uidemur . . . calamo ludimus* (“it looks like I’m jesting . . . I trifle with my pen,” 4.2.1–2).¹⁹

quicumque fuerit ergo narrandi iocus . . .

(Phaed. 2 *prol.* 5)

Therefore, whatever jest there was to be told . . .

tu qui nasute scripta destringis mea,
et hoc iocorum legere fastidis genus.

(Phaed. 4.7.1–2)

¹⁵ Jennings (2000) 40–69, 76–80.

¹⁶ Greek fable: λόγος ψευδῆς εἰκονίζων ἀλήθειαν (“fictitious *logos* picturing a truth,” Theon *Prog.* 1); van Dijk (1997); Most (1999) 25–47.

¹⁷ Wheatley (2000) 37–9. *Aesopus finxit* (“Aesop invented/fashioned,” 4.18.3); 4.22.5: anything inferior is Phaedrus’ *fictum* (“invention/falsehood”).

¹⁸ Gelley (1995a) 18.

¹⁹ *Est Musa quod ludit mea* (“what my Muse plays at,” *App.* 2.1). Muses are liars: Hes. *Theog.* 26–8.

You, who satirically censure my writings, and dislike reading these sort of jests.²⁰

Nasutus (“satirically”)—“satire” word²¹—underscores fable’s “humoring” contract.

Fabella

Breuitas (“brevity”) does not mean Phaedrus will be brief;²² *neniae* are not “trifles” (3 *prol.* 10; 4.2.3);²³ *fabella* is not “a little fable.” *Fabella* differs from *fabula* not by reflecting length,²⁴ but by suiting a *frons prima* (“facade,” 4.2.6) which shrugs on troped attire. As with “fictiveness,” Phaedrus cashes in by manipulating “inconsequentiality.”²⁵

Aemulatio

Aesopus auctor quam materiam repperit,
hanc ego poliui uersibus senariis.

(Phaed. 1 *prol.* 1–2)

Aesop invented the stuff; I’ve polished it into senarian verse.

Book 1, mostly animal fable from Greek collections,²⁶ is *Aesop*’s, not *Phaedrus*’, *Fables*. Book 2 loosens *aemulatio* (“emulation”),²⁷ but Aesop remains prominently named (2 *prol.* 1; 2.9 *epil.* 1). Book 3 suggests

²⁰ Phaedrus sustains ambiguity? Cf. 3.4: gnomic, *iocans* butcher censured because *ridicule magis hoc dictum quam uere aestimo* (“I judge this said more for laughs than truth,” 3.4.5); 2.5.23 (Tiberius’ “humor”).

²¹ Hor. *Sat.* 1.6.5; “taste”: Connors (2000) 220–4.

²² Suspiciously rhetorical: Henderson (2001) 41. *Verbosa* . . . *commendatio* (“wordy praise,” 2 *prol.* 13) of *breuitas* (“brevity,” 2 *prol.* 12); *breui docebo* (“I’ll explain in short,” 3 *prol.* 34); *breuiter proloquar* (“I’ll speak briefly,” 3.7.1—twenty-seven lines); *exemplum breuiter adponam* (“I’ll briefly serve up an example,” 3.10.2); 3.10.60 (!); reward for brevity at 3 *epil.* 8; forty-nine lines of “brief” narration: *narratione posteris tradam breui* (“I’ll hand down to posterity in a brief narrative,” 4.5.2); *si non ingenium, certe breuitatem adproba* (“if you don’t approve my talent, at least approve my brevity,” 4 *epil.* 7); *Aesopus* . . . *narrat hoc breuiter* (“Aesop relates this, briefly,” *App.* 12.5). Occasionally he is: *breuis Aesopi fabula* (“a short fable of Aesop,” 1.10.3); 5.8.5.

²³ *Neniae* (“trifles”), *ineptiae* (“trivial [verses]”), *nugae* (“trifles/jests”): Heller (1943) 238–41.

²⁴ *Fabella*: 1.2 (thirty-one lines); *fabella*, twenty-one lines); 1.5 (eleven lines); 1.15 (*parua*: ten lines); 1.26 (twelve lines). *Fabula*: 1.1 (fifteen lines); 1.10 (*breuis*: ten lines).

²⁵ Henderson (2001) 41: “apology.”

²⁶ Perry (1962) 287–346; Zafiropoulos (2001) 1–44. Perry (1965) lxxxv–lxxxvi: three (from thirty-one) “inventions” in book 1.

²⁷ 2 *prol.* 8–11: *equidem omni cura morem seruabo senis. / sed si libuerit aliquid interponere* . . . (“I’ll certainly observe the old man’s wishes with great pains, but if it’s O.K. to put something in . . .”).

the danger is over—*PHAEDRI LIBELLOS* (“PHAEDRUS’ LITTLE BOOKS”) the first words (3 *prol.* 1)—but he never names himself again. We know nothing about Phaedrus that is not projected by his *persona*.²⁸ Is this inopportune, or self-masking?²⁹

Roman authors approach Greece’s burdensome loquacity through dialogue with their source/s:³⁰

quoniam occuparat alter ut primus foret,
ne solus esset, studui, quod superfuit.
nec haec inuidia, uerum est aemulatio.

(Phaed. 2.9.5–7)

Since someone else took this up—so that he’s the first—I’ve striven in case he’s also the *only*—which is all that’s left. This isn’t envy, but emulation.³¹

...librum exarabo tertium Aesopi stilo

(Phaed. 3 *prol.* 29)

...the third book I’ve reaped from Aesop’s pen

inuenit ille, nostra perfecit manus.

(Phaed. 4.22.8)

He invented it, my hand perfected it.

Even after book 3’s “outing,” he points his *aemulatio*—hedging his bets? This fabulist (like slave/Aesop) *translulit* (“translates,” 3 *prol.* 36). Whom do you shoot?

Libellus

Horace fabulizes “with humour and delicacy”; fabulists wear hobnails:³²

Aesop and Babrius and Phaedrus have been quoted in this essay and always to demonstrate the greater wealth and wit of the Horatian version. But detail apart, Horace’s poetry is...more powerful because the [city/country mouse] fable is not a free-standing anecdote but an

²⁸ Holzberg (2002b) 299–300.

²⁹ Cf. Propertius: Fantham (1996) 66. Wardle (1997) 323–45: dating influences perceptions of constraint in Valerius Maximus (who suppresses himself despite flattering the regime?).

³⁰ *Loquaces* Greeks: App. 30; *quodsi labori fauerit Latium meo, / plures habebit quos opponat Graeciae* (“if Latium favors my work, she will have more to compare with Greece,” 2.9.8–9). Horace’s “rivals”: Scodel (1987) 199–215.

³¹ *Re commendetur, non auctoris nomine* (“commended on its own account, not its author’s name,” 2 *prol.* 7). “Firsts”: Horsfall (1993b) 63–5; Hinds (1998) 52–62.

³² MacLeod (1977) 362; Goodyear (1982) 625; Archibald (1910) xviii.

integral part of the great personal satire [2. 6] whose theme it supports and extends.³³

A book (*five!*) of uncontextualized verse fables differs radically from one fable contextualized inside a *Satire* within satire-tradition. *Satura*—not *fabula*—*tota nostra est* (“satire...is totally ours,” Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.94). No rules govern Phaedrus’ “first.”³⁴

duplex libelli dos est...

(Phaed. 1 *prol.* 3)

This little book is a double treat...

Phaedri libellos legere si desideras...

(Phaed. 3 *prol.* 1)

If you want to read Phaedrus’ little books...

quantum libellum cum uacaris perleges...

(Phaed. 4 *prol.* 14)

You’ll read through the fourth book when you’ve time...

parua libellum sustine patientia...

(Phaed. 4.7.3)

Endure my little book...

Familiar verse-book sentiments,³⁵ but the book-of-fables gains *conceptual* safety because massed fables obfuscate self-actualizing. An exemplary narrative between two parties with a stake in “understanding,” each fable engagement requires re-contextualizing to overcome “insistent passivity and anonymity, even an automatism.”³⁶ Despite being a recognizably ethical collection, *specifically* critical message is blunted by lack of context (narrative frame, performative act).

Phaedrus’ Fama

The story above is not *impossible*. Conscious “outspoken discretion”³⁷ could demonstrate how socio-political critique survived informers and hypersensitive emperors. But this reading ignores intimations of double-speak at work in, for example, Phaedrus’ protestations of innocence at

³³ West (1974) 78–9.

³⁴ Perry (1965) xi, lxxxv.

³⁵ Fantham (1996) 63–4.

³⁶ Keenan (1997) 56–7.

³⁷ Connors (2000) 234 on Juvenal.

targeting individuals (3 *prol.*).³⁸ Such a programmatic reading disregards signals that Phaedrus' fame is more critical to him than safety. Indeed, Phaedrus may augment his *auctoritas* ("author-ity") and *fama* ("repute") by distorting the dangers that may proceed from his writing. Let us shake up the pieces and examine another way in which they fall.

Fame

Phaedrus, "a very self-conscious author,"³⁹ has big ambitions: where Aesop trod a footpath, he will construct a highway (*ego illius pro semita feci uiam*, 3 *prol.* 38).⁴⁰

si Phryx Aesopus potuit...
aeternam famam condere ingenio suo,
ego litteratae qui sum proprior Graeciae,
cur somno inerti deseram patriae decus...?
(Phaed. 3 *prol.* 52–5)

If Phrygian Aesop could... establish eternal fame by his own genius, why should I, who am more closely connected to lettered Greece, forsake my country's glory through slothful inactivity...?⁴¹

Aesopi nomen sicubi interposuero,
cui reddidi iam pridem quicquid debui,
auctoritatis esse scito gratia.
(Phaed. 5 *prol.* 1–3)

If I introduce the name of Aesop anywhere, to whom I've long since given back whatever I owed, know that this is for the sake of his prestige.

Desire for *fama* and *gloria* resounds, counter-pointing his unrecognized genius: *paene natus sim schola* ("born almost in a school," 3 *prol.* 20), devoted entirely to his art (*curamque habendi penitus corde eraserim*, 3 *prol.* 21)—off-key renditions of poetic *topoi*⁴²—but *fastidiose tamen in coetum recipior* ("received nevertheless in the [poetic] ranks with disgust," 3 *prol.* 23).

³⁸ Henderson (2001) 82–3.

³⁹ Perry (1965) lxxiii.

⁴⁰ Callim. *Aet. frag.* 1.25–8 (and fable imagery): Acosta-Hughes and Stephens (2002) 238–55; Henderson (2001) 82.

⁴¹ 3 *prol.* 52–5: after 'Phrygian', synonymous with 'slave' (Westermann (1955) 7, 117), read "lettered" Greeks in *slave terms* ("doublespeak"). Slaves "lettered" with brands/tattoos: Petron. *Sat.* 103, 105; Plaut. *Cas.* 401; cf. Cic. *Cat.* 1.32; Headlam and Knox (1922) 264–6; Jones (1987) 139–55; Gustafson (1997) 79–105. How do Romans, captive to literary Greece, emerge from this?

⁴² Henderson (2001) 78–9.

si nostrum studium ad aures cultas peruenit,
et arte fictas animus sentit fabulas,
omnem querelam submouet felicitas.

(Phaed. 2.9.12–14)

If my work reaches cultured ears, and the mind deems that the fables were made-up with skill, then happiness banishes all complaining.

Aemulatio invokes comparisons with originals: *rem me professum dicet fors aliquis grauem* (“perhaps someone will say that I’ve avowed for myself a burdensome thing,” 3 *prol.* 51). But this genre ranks lowly and/or Phaedrus’ status diminishes his worth in others’ eyes.⁴³

Aesopi ingenio statuam posuere Attici,
seruumque collocarunt aeterna in basi,
patere honoris scirent ut cuncti uiam
nec generi tribui sed uirtuti gloriam.

(Phaed. 2.9.1–4)

The Athenians set up a statue to Aesop’s genius, and placed a slave on an eternal pedestal, so that everyone would know that the course of honor lay open—fame is allotted not by birth but worth.⁴⁴

laudatis utiliora quae contempseris
saepe inueniri testis haec narratio est.

(Phaed. 1.12.1–2)

Something you’ve despised is often found to be more useful than something praised, as this story testifies.⁴⁵

Phaedrus is the pearl on the dung-heap (*hoc illis narro qui me non intellegunt*, “I tell this for those who don’t appreciate me,” 3.12.8). His crit-

⁴³ 4.7.1–2 (above): read *nasutus* (“large-nosed/satirical”) within “satiric bargain”; or as “turning one’s nose up”: Perry (1965) 311; Freudenburg (2001) 121. “Sour grapes”: *qui, facere quae non possunt, uerbis eleuant, / adscribere hoc debebunt exemplum sibi* (“those who disparage with words what they cannot do themselves, ought to include themselves in this,” 4.3.5–6). Dialogue (literally, 4.7) with critics who *eleuant uerbis* (cf. *adscribere*) reflects the burden of fable’s “popular” origin: *inlitteratum plausum nec desidero* (“I don’t want plaudits from illiterati,” 4 *prol.* 20). Cf. Ruffell (2003) 55: “Phaedrus’ adoption of (or return to) mime-like *senarii* speaks volumes about his own stance within Roman culture and hierarchies of power.” It is (also) part of constructing his right to write: quoting Ennius (4.7, 3 *epil.*), Virgil (3 *prol.*), talking the talk (*color*, 4 *prol.* 8; *aemulatio*). Conventions, from one well-versed: *libellos* (“little books,” 1), *nenias* (“trifles,” 10) but *carmina* (3); *negotium* (2), *otium* (13); Muses’ *limen* (16), quasi-*Dichterweihe* (17–19); un-businesslike *doctus poet* (21, 26).

⁴⁴ Athens’ ideological value: accept *me* because *Athens*—artistic standard-setter—accepted Aesop. *uia honoris*: suggests *cursus honorum* un-traveled by slave/freedman? Cf. very “Roman” *pro semita feci uiam*, 3 *prol.* 38.

⁴⁵ “Usefulness” (4.2, 4.11)—(Horatian) aim appropriate to fable: Sullivan (1993) 150–1.

ics are envious/spiteful: there is so much material that others already emulate the original or challenge his perfectings.⁴⁶ Who is a bee and who is a drone?⁴⁷

quid iudicare cogitas, *Liuor*, modo?

.....

quicquid putabit esse dignum memoria,
Aesopi dicet; si quid minus adriserit,
a me contendet fictum...

(Phaed. 4.22.1, 3–5)

How are you planning to judge me, *Liuor*? ... He'll call Aesop's whatever bits of my work he thinks worth keeping; if anything pleases less, he'll maintain it was made-up by me...

ergo hinc abesto, *Liuor*, ne frustra gemas,
quom iam mihi sollemnis dabitur gloria.

(Phaed. 3 *prol.* 60–1)

Go away, *Liuor*, lest you groan in vain when eternal fame is granted me.⁴⁸

So many tropes of *fama*: ideally, dedicatee and others copy *Phaedrus*' Fables (4 *prol.* 17–9), proving Phaedrus *memoria*-worthy (4.5.2) *Latinis dum manebit pretium litteris* ("so long as Latin literature remains valued," 4 *epil.* 6) and literary skill is valued foremost (4.26).⁴⁹

Aesop's death was (problematically) unworthy of emulation.⁵⁰ Rather, Phaedrus highlights *Socrates*' death, but not as the paradigmatic philosophical demise:⁵¹ *cuius non fugio mortem si famam adsequar* ("I don't flee his death if I can match his fame," 3.9.3). Is this about any fame at any price?⁵²

⁴⁶ Fake "Aesops" prosper, like forgeries inscribed "Praxiteles" (5 *prol.*), but Phaedrus' fables *quas Aesopias, non Aesopi, nomino* ("are Aesopic, not Aesop's," 4 *prol.* 11). "Wealth of material" (3 *epil.* 5–7, 4 *prol.* 2) satirizes audience's failings; straightforwardly, Aesop produced "few": 4 *prol.* 12.

⁴⁷ *hanc praeterissem fabulam silentio, si pactam fuci non recusasset fidem* ("I would have passed by this fable in silence, if the drones had not taken exception to the agreement," 3.13.16–7).

⁴⁸ Casual "Go away!" contrasts *seriously* religious *sollemnis*: the chasm he must bridge?

⁴⁹ Henderson (2001) 85–7.

⁵⁰ Wheatley (2000) 18. Aesop remains a slave (2.9, *App.* 17), his fate omitted. Consider role-model (3 *prol.* 57–9) Orpheus' end.

⁵¹ Compton (1990) 330–47; Compton (2006) 19–40, 154–65; Griffin (1986) 66, 70–1.

⁵² Sen. *Contr.* 2.4.13: dying for a *bon-mot*. Slavery to fame: Hor. *Sat.* 1.6; Anderson (1960b) 230–2, 237.

Induxi Te ad Legendum?

“Have I persuaded you to read?” (3 *prol.* 62). Does Phaedrus, beset by enemies bent upon literary destruction, also imply this question: *will I survive to write again?* *sic saepe ingenia calamitate intercidunt* (“often has genius perished through misfortune,” *App.* 14.7).⁵³ Nothing cements fame like book-banning. On Cremutius Cordus, Tacitus writes: *nam contra punitis ingeniis gliscit auctoritas, neque aliud externi reges aut qui eadem saevitia usi sunt nisi dedecus sibi atque illis gloriam peperere* (“*auctoritas* increases greatly when genius is punished, nor have foreign kings or those possessed of their ferocity done more than to create dishonor for themselves and renown for the other party,” *Ann.* 4.35). The parodies of exiled Neronian A. Fabricius Veiento were burned: *conquisitos lectitatosque donec cum periculo parabantur: mox licentia habendi oblivionem attulit* (“as long as they were risky to obtain, they were sought and read eagerly; as soon as they became freely available, they were forgotten,” *Ann.* 14.50).⁵⁴

Phaedrus sometimes exudes the stench of burning martyr; it would be naïve to assume that we are not being led by the nose. He begins mildly, concerned, since *quod arbores loquantur, non tantum ferae* (“trees speak too, not just beasts,” 1 *prol.* 6) lest *calumniari si quis autem uoluerit* (1 *prol.* 5). We can read “should anyone choose to run it down,”⁵⁵ but *calumnia* packs a contemporary punch, as in 1.17: a dog in court as *calumniator* (“false accuser”). Phaedrus plays truth-games: the slave disguising truth with fables wishes to avoid *calumnia* (3 *prol.* 37).⁵⁶

Phaedrus’ “enemies” are *Liur* (2.9.10, 3 *prol.* 60–1, 4.22.1) and mysterious “somebodies” who deny him the praise he deserves (*non tamen eripiet laudis conscientiam*, “[*Liur*] will not snatch away my consciousness of desert,” 2.9.11).

sin autem rabulis doctus occurrit labor,
sinistra quos in lucem natura extulit,
nec quidquam possunt nisi meliores carpere,
fatale exilium corde durato feram,
donec Fortunam criminis pudeat sui.
(Phaed. 2.9.15–9)

⁵³ Fabulist as ass with lyre? *If only...*

⁵⁴ Rutledge (2001) 229–32.

⁵⁵ Perry (1965) 191.

⁵⁶ Slaves as innately deceitful: Bradley (1994) 110–7. Cf. 1.10.1–2: deceitful reputation lingers, even if you speak truthfully.

But if my learned labor runs up against wrangling advocates, the sort whom perverse nature brought forth into the light, who can't do anything except carp at their betters, then I will bear my fated exile with steadfast heart until Fortune is shamed by her guilt.⁵⁷

The prologue to book 3 performs this stylized paranoia by building gradually the fabulist's "hard luck"—maybe you'll read it; I'm not admitted among The Poets—then king-hitting with the news that, actually (I've been doing so well that), SEJANUS targeted ME:⁵⁸

quodsi accusator alius Seiano foret,
si testis alius, iudex alius denique...

(3 *prol.* 41–2)

But if any other than Sejanus might be accuser, if any other might be witness, if, again, any other might be judge...

Note the vivid tense (immediacy of the danger),⁵⁹ exaggeration of Sejanus' roles (accuser, witness *and* judge), and how ambiguity remains: is this *really* what it means? He damps down again immediately, still fabulizing but with *caueat lector*: reading wrongly will only show up YOU. By the end of book 3 the mysterious somebodies return:

haec exsecutus sum propterea pluribus,
breuitate nimia quoniam quosdam offendimus.

(Phaed. 3.10.59–60)

I've explained these things at length because I've offended certain people with my too brief brevity.

excedit animus quem proposui terminum,
sed difficulter continetur spiritus,
integritatis qui sinceræ conscius
a noxiorum premitur insolentiis.
qui sint, requiris? apparebunt tempore.

(Phaed. 3 *epil.* 28–32).

I've gone beyond the limit which I had intended, but my emotions are contained with difficulty, conscious of my genuine integrity which is slandered by those insolently pernicious. *Who are they*, you ask?—They'll show themselves in time.

⁵⁷ *App.* 2: critic *tacite irascitur* ("secretly angry").

⁵⁸ Cf. Henderson (2001) 70.

⁵⁹ *Deligens* ("choosing," 40)...*foret* ("he might be," 41)...*faterer* ("I might confess," 43)...*delenirem* ("I might soothe," 44): Perry (1965) lxxx.

Feel the power of my verse—(*uim carminis*, 3 *prol.* 3). Is this for real?⁶⁰ A connection could prove lethal (and glorious?) for years after Sejanus' death (Tac. *Ann.* 6.37), but I noted how *easy* it is to make fables suit, to read *wrongly*, to don the feathers—to fashion yourself as a *really* successful poet whose self-effacing *neniae* (“trifles”) so impressed Tiberius' partner that the poet almost became a fabulizing Aesopic/Socratic martyr.⁶¹

Consider, again, *fictis iocari nos meminerit fabulis* (“may no one forget that I jest with made-up ‘stories’,” 1 *prol.* 7), intriguingly echoed in the first fable's moral, *scripta est...fabula / qui fictis causis...opprimunt* (“this fable was written [on account of those] who oppress...with made-up lawsuits,” 1.1.14–5). Tiberian law-suits were frequent, malicious and deadly.⁶² Fable's *fict*- constructions are rarely positive, and distinctly ambiguous.⁶³ Juxtaposing varieties of fictitiousness renders reading equivocal: can we *believe* 1.1's *epimythium* and thus the “courageous writer” scenario?

Reading “moral” as integral to “fable” remains unfashionable, but Phaedrus' idiosyncratic destabilizing “morals” demand re-integration: “The device turns the ‘frozen’ compilation into quasi-‘live’ ammunition once more.”⁶⁴

hoc quo pertineat dicet qui me nouerit.

(Phaed. 3.1.7)

Anyone who knows me can say what this is about.

This moral supplements “what the old woman said to the empty wine jar”:

o suavis anima, quale in te dicam bonum
antehac fuisse, tales cum sint reliquiae.

(Phaed. 3.1.5–6)

O sweet draught, I can tell how good you were before, since your remains are so distinguished.

The paranoiac instinct for concealment suits a heavily veiled criticism of loss of freedom/s in the principate. Or is it a flippant digression on the

⁶⁰ So, MacLeod (1977) 359 on Hor. *Ep.* 1.19.

⁶¹ *Successus ad perniciem multos deuocat* (“success calls many to destruction,” 3.5.1). *Petulans* crucified for throwing rocks at prominent targets.

⁶² Rutledge (2001) 95–106.

⁶³ *App.* 5–6: Prometheus (*figulus*) made “Truth”; his apprentice “Guile” *finxit* a near copy (“Falsehood”).

⁶⁴ Henderson (1976) 41, (2001) 174. Perry (1940) 404–5: *epimythium* as “author's moral” to “non-moral fables.”

fabulist's old age?⁶⁵ Could it be an ecphrastic response to the Hellenistic *anus* genre-piece? We have been excluded from understanding.⁶⁶

Exile (*fatale exilium*, 2.9.18) was a terrible thing for a Roman. But what sort of Thraco-Graeco-Roman is Phaedrus? Given his perversion of the ideal death, perhaps he presents here a "prestige" model of exile. Exile befalls prominent people—Roman citizens who provoke the wrong reader/observer. Ovid's highly constructed "myth" of (mysterious) exile demonstrates the *topos*' maneuverability.⁶⁷ Junius Gallio's experience is almost Menippean: post-Sejanus, an ill-judged suggestion about rewarding praetorians irked Tiberius. Gallio chose exile on Lesbos, but was *retrahitur* ("dragged back") to Rome to live in various magistrates' homes, since *amoenus* ("pleasant") Lesbos offered too *facile* ("easy") an exile (Tac. *Ann.* 6.3).

The exile *from Rome* exiled *in Rome*: Phaedrus has paradoxes aplenty to re-clothe, not least that of "belonging"—for construction as "Roman exile" simultaneously ordains one as "Roman." Patterns of Ovidian exile⁶⁸ are mirrored in Phaedrus' performance of exile in, for example, the epilogue to book 3: avoidance of naming,⁶⁹ an atmosphere of "fear" (*qui sint, requiris?*, "who are they, you ask?" 32), protestation of innocence (22–3), third-party appeal (24) for *beneficium/clementia* ("favor"/"mercy"; *auxilio locus est*, "there's a place for your help," 16; *adiuvare*, "to help"; *bonitas... tua... beneficio utilis*, "your kindness... beneficial by your favor," 17–18), assumption of receipt,⁷⁰ even an apophthegmatic stoicism.⁷¹

But if we read the epilogue to book 3 as answering ("closing")⁷² the prologue to book 3's stylized "right to write,"⁷³ Phaedrus' *exilium* (the *calamitas* at 3 *prol.* 40?) blatantly overdresses his acceptance (only)

⁶⁵ Perry (1965) 258–9.

⁶⁶ Munich, Glyptothek 467. Cf. "Time," resembling Lysippus' *Kairos* at 5.8: Rüdiger (1966). *Apoxyomenos* in Tiberius' bedroom: Plin. *NH* 34.62. Tiberius' Hellenistic tastes: Stewart (1977). Phaedrus *can* elaborate elsewhere: *primum... secundum... nouissime*, 4.11.14–21; 4.21.16–26.

⁶⁷ Claassen (1999) 29–35; Millar (1993) 1–17.

⁶⁸ Davis (2002) 267–72.

⁶⁹ 3 *prol.*: Phaedrus, Eutychus, Muses, Pierian Mt., Thunderer Jove, Mnemosyne, Sinon, Dardanian rex, Aesop, SEJANUS, Phrygia, Aesop, Anacharsis, Scythia, Greece, Thrace, Linus, Apollo, Muse, Orpheus, Hebrus, *Luor. Mors* (what potential!) as only "name" in the epilogue to book 3: Perry (1965) 292.

⁷⁰ *Esse uidear ne tibi molestior* ("lest I am seen by you to be too annoying," 3 *epil.* 2).

⁷¹ *Nam uita morti propior est cotidie* ("for life draws daily nearer to death," 3 *epil.* 10).

⁷² *Supersunt mihi quae scribam, sed parco sciens* ("I could write more, but intentionally I refrain," 3 *epil.* 1).

⁷³ Duff (1964) 107; Henderson (2001) 57–92.

fastidiose...in coetum (“disdainfully...in [poetic?] company”).⁷⁴ This is less about writing criticism than constructing oneself as a criticizing writer—and a Roman writer *per se*?

saepe impetrauit ueniam confessus reus—
quanto innocenti iustius debet dari?

(Phaed. 3 *epil.* 22–3)

Often an accused, having confessed, has gained pardon—how much more justly ought the innocent be treated?

The guilty man who confesses can be read against another “guilty man” who tells all. In another classic tale of infiltration,⁷⁵ Vergil’s Greek “deserter” Sinon lets the cat out of the bag and the horse into the city (*Aen.* 2.57–194). Sinon’s appearance in quotation (3 *prol.* 27–8) is a multi-stratified image of “cozening”⁷⁶ as we read Sinon (Greek among Phrygians-to-be-Romans) as Phaedrus (Thracian-Greek-writing-Phrygian among Romans), facilitating another conquest for those who took Rome captive.⁷⁷ The Romanized fabulist uses thoroughly Roman literary models to sabotage any possibility of an “open text”:⁷⁸

periculosum est credere et non credere
(Phaed. 3.10.1)

It’s dangerous to believe and not believe.

Freedmen

The ex-slave from Thrace re-writing a Phrygian slave’s Greek prose fables into Latin verse is unique.⁷⁹ Accepting his freedman status affects how we read his striving for fame and the quasi-paranoiac aura imbuing his asides.⁸⁰ From the Athenians’ unlikely memorializing of slave-Aesop

⁷⁴ Boyle and Sullivan (1991) 383–4: “perhaps naïve in expecting recognition from his ideologically unsympathetic fellow writers.”

⁷⁵ Cf. Keenan (1997) 48 (wolf in sheep’s clothing).

⁷⁶ Henderson (2001) 80.

⁷⁷ Cf. Edwards and Woolf (2003a) 15.

⁷⁸ Kermode (1979) 18. Can “guilt,” like “innocence,” be a pose of doublespeak? Bartsch (1994) 88–90. Quoting may protect; but Phaedrus’ studiously literary (*quondam legi quam puer sententiam*, “I once read as a boy,” 3 *epil.* 33; cf. Hinds (1998) 63–74) use of Ennius (*palam multire plebeio piaculum est*, “it’s a sin for the lowly to mutter openly,” 3 *epil.* 34) again undermines “belief.”

⁷⁹ Fantham (1996) 3. *Augusti libertus*: manuscript title; assumed from 2.5, 3 *prol.*? Henderson (2001) 195 n. 6. *Milieux*? On the milieu inhabited by these freedmen, see Christes (1979).

⁸⁰ Thus Fitzgerald (2000) 88: Phaedrus pre-empts servile stigma “by attacking social confusion.”

(2.9) let us extrapolate how freedmen memorialize *nec generi...sed uirtuti* (“by worth not birth,” 2.9.4).⁸¹ I noted the incongruity of codifying a fluid, performative genre. But “the book” embraces concepts of circulation (free/discrete) and permanence—seen in authorial anxieties about lack of circulation, misuse and impermanence.⁸² The freedman’s book engages with its own reception (*fama, memoria*, posterity) and “puts a hard edge on the timeless nowhere of fables”⁸³ with contemporary allusion, language and names. Is this ideologically akin to the self-conscious monumentality of freedmen’s funerary monuments?⁸⁴

[O]ver-representation of freedmen in inscriptions from Rome is an interesting indication of...anxiety to ensure that everyone was aware that they had achieved full integration as citizens.⁸⁵

Freedmen and slaves with the means⁸⁶ are hyper-motivated: the slave has no history, no kin, no perpetuity; slavery is social death.⁸⁷ This lack of identity is reflected, again, in names—in the stereotyped names (“Phaedrus”?) representing an “anonymity...characteristic of servitude.”⁸⁸

The Greek notion of a book as a *μνημα* (“memorial”), with its overt connection to the tomb(-stone),⁸⁹ is part of the cultural underpinning of Roman poetry (cf. Hor. *Carm.* 3.30.1). Ironically, but aptly, the freedman makes his name in a genre which, more often than not, demonstrates “the fragility of identity.”⁹⁰

⁸¹ The prologue to book 3’s twist: solemn dedication to Eutychus’ “honor and worth” (*honori et meritis dedicans illum tuis*, 30) undermined by *quem si leges, laetabor; sin autem minus, / habebunt certe quo se oblectent posteri* (“if you read it, I’ll be happy; if not, posterity will have something to enjoy,” 31–2).

⁸² Roman (2001) 119–29.

⁸³ Henderson (2001) 62.

⁸⁴ Lattimore (1962) 227–30; Kampen (1981) 47–58. Trimalchio’s memorial narration (Petron. *Sat.* 41): Saller and Shaw (1984) 125; Whitehead (1993) 299–325.

⁸⁵ Wiedemann (1987) 18–9.

⁸⁶ Wealth, literacy, urban proximity: Taylor (1961) 113–32; Harris (1983) 87–111; Mann (1985) 204–6; Joshel (1992) xii, 58.

⁸⁷ On “social death” see Patterson (1982). Phaedrus treats slaves unsympathetically? They neglect master’s property (1.8), require chaining (dog: 3.7), are untrustworthy/dangerous (*App.* 18: cats eat rooster master), run away (*App.* 20), seduce your wife (*App.* 27). 3.10’s wicked freedman, desirous of becoming heir (*sperante heredem suffici se proximum*, “hoping to have himself substituted as the next heir,” 12), destroys family with false stories.

⁸⁸ Konstan (1989) 275 n. 29; Henderson (2001) 68–9, 74.

⁸⁹ Dupont (1999) 233–6.

⁹⁰ Keenan (1997) 45. *App.* 31: overburdened mule reincarnated as stinging wasp; is this the ex-slave as satirist? Perry (1965) 415.

*Slippery Speech**Conventional Morality*

Freedmen can form part of a sub-elite (manifest in the *Aug. lib.* status tag),⁹¹ but might also be constrained to prolong their servile life with little discernible improvement. The artifactual sketch of freedman Eutychus acting out what the Roman does with his *otium*⁹²—at home, with family and friends, relaxing mind and body, flirting with the Muses before returning to *negotium* (3 *prol.* 1–16)—contrasts starkly with the language used by Phaedrus to excuse any malice from his revelations on the *mores hominum: errabit... rapiens... nudabit... notare... ostendere* (3 *prol.* 45–50). “Straying,” “seizing,” “stripping,” “branding,” “displaying”: this language has nothing to do with “men” when situated between *seruitus obnoxia*... (“the slave, liable to punishment,” 34) and *Phryx Aesopus* (“Phrygian Aesop,” 52).

We have assumed that Phaedrus’ strategies were successful in ensuring *his* survival, and the (partial) survival of his *Fables*.⁹³

brevitatis nostrae praemium ut reddas peto.

(Phaed. 3 *epil.* 8)

I want the reward you promised for my brevity.

Is this the same *brevitas* with which, in 3.7, he will speak of *libertas*, that most fundamental and endangered Roman virtue? Something still smells bad. The *kudos* gained in surviving the attentions (real or imagined) of Sejanus ought to set up the critic for life. Instead, from book 3 onwards, the volume comprises vague complaints to dubious dedicatees, and a cascade of utterly conventional morality reinforcing a grim *status quo* where “rank is underscored rather than leveled.”⁹⁴ Was

⁹¹ Weaver (1963) 272–8.

⁹² Connors (2000) 208–34: leisure as “cultural artefact.” Is fable part of Ro-man’s “rhetoric of moralising” (e.g., Edwards (1993) 25)?

⁹³ Losses (*not* necessarily consequent to “calamity”): Duff (1964) 109; Perry (1965) lxxxii.

⁹⁴ Henderson (2001) 81. Sullivan (1993) 152: fabulist’s “anti-heroic posture”? Rather, we are taught how *not* to be heroic. 2. 1: greed is rich, modesty is poor. 2.7: poverty is safe—great wealth dangerous. 3.5 (above). 3.10: freedmen are wicked, citizens rash, but *Diuus* Augustus has the answers. 3.18: be content with your lot. 4.1: born unlucky, always unlucky. 4.6: safety in obscurity. 4.9: crafty types win out [against us]. 4.12: rich are praised for wrong reasons. 4.18: rejoice nor complain too quickly. 4.23: *homo doctus*’ possessions pale before internal riches. 5.4: rashness brings ill to many, good to few. 5.6: don’t let hope fool you. 5.9: don’t correct your superiors. Some might target abusers:

the consequence of books 1 and 2's calamity *so* calamitous that, while the fabulist can still write, his "right," his *libertas*, has gone?⁹⁵ What has happened to the Latin Aesop?

Animal-fable is sometimes reckoned the only extant ancient "slave literature."⁹⁶ But this is slave-literature *because it teaches you how to be a slave*. What do Phaedrus' three freedmen dedicatees get from texts rendering social mobility improbable? Does an infiltrative discourse of dominancy set *us* up to read *them* down (comparable to Trimalchio's cronies whose proverbial language may "appear to presuppose an animal fable")?⁹⁷ What sort of "reader model" does Phaedrus espouse?⁹⁸

Perhaps [book 5] was written at the request of that sponsor *ex officio*, who was a man apparently well known to the author but one for whom he had no high regard and from whom he had nothing to expect.⁹⁹

The slave is readily "animalized"¹⁰⁰ (= dehumanized).¹⁰¹ Consider the final fable of the collection as it stands: a dog has grown old; once strong, quick against all beasts, and always satisfying his hunter-master (*cum domino semper fecisset satis*, "he had always given satisfaction to his master," 5.10.2), now his teeth have decayed and he is chastised for losing his prey. The *senex* *Lacon* replies:

Non te destituit animus, sed uires meae.
Quod fuimus lauda, si iam damnas quod sumus.

(Phaed. 5.10.8–9)

My heart didn't fail me, but my strength. Praise what I was, if now you damn what I am.

The supplement is, *hoc cur, †Philete†, scripserim pulchre uides* ("why I've written this, you can well see," 10). Another reference to the poet's

3.17, 4.13; most reinforce (3.6, 3.16, 3.17, 4.4, 5.7). Wheatley (2000) 23: Phaedrus' "condescension" towards Aesop-the-slave "is all the more evident inasmuch as his own history as a slave is marginalized." Aesop persuades *seruus profugiens dominum naturae asperae* ("a slave running away from a master of harsh character," *App.* 20.1) to stay; cf. 1.3, 1.15, 3.7, *App.* 21). Duff (1964) 123 compares ex-slave Publilius Syrus' *sententiae*.

⁹⁵ Cf. Freudenburg (2001) 71–82 on Hor. *Sat.* 2.1.

⁹⁶ Fitzgerald (2000) 2, 101: "Some... seem to speak from the perspective of the slave, even if the appended morals make their application more universal and therefore less subversive." Rightly more complicated: Wiedemann (1987) 11; Hopkins (1993) 3–27.

⁹⁷ Horsfall (1989) 93. Set-up? Henderson (2001) 67.

⁹⁸ Edmunds (2001) 39–62, 108–32; cf. Eco (1992) 64.

⁹⁹ Perry (1965) lxxviii.

¹⁰⁰ Bradley (2000) 110–25. And emperors: Anderson (1960b) 251–2.

¹⁰¹ D'Arms (1991) 175.

advanced years?¹⁰² Will there be no more fabulizing because he has lost his metaphorical teeth?¹⁰³ It is (again) perilous to mine for biographical nuggets, but the image of the faithful old Greek “servant”/*auctor* (*Aug. lib.?*) is begging us to ask about the “master”/patron (*Caesar?*) and the *satis* service.

The Rara Mens

...rara mens intellegit
quod interiore condidit cura angulo.

(Phaed. 4.2.6–7)

...only the extraordinary mind perceives what is carefully hidden away
in secret corners.

There is only one model reader. It is hardly fortuitous that fable re-emerges in the Principate when methods for communicating difference require re-negotiation. “New” models emerge for praising—recycled Hellenistic panegyric¹⁰⁴—as well as blaming. In the Greek tradition, recreated in this era in, for instance, the *Life of Aesop*, kings and tyrants are entirely appropriate recipients of fables because *they really need fables*:

duplex libelli dos est: quod risum mouet,
et quod prudenti uitam consilio monet.

(Phaed. 1 *prol.* 3–4)

This little book is a double treat: it excites laughter, and by wise advice it suggests a way of living.

As we have seen, “metaphorical vocabulary serves as a cover for a discourse of power.”¹⁰⁵ Fables become a “treatment” or “therapy” (Gell. *NA* 2.29)¹⁰⁶ for tyranny—“the script of a future performance”¹⁰⁷—an image recurring particularly in Greek writings on power.¹⁰⁸ Post-Sejanus, Phaedrus writes *his dolorem delenirem remediis* (“I soothe my pain with these remedies,” 3 *prol.* 44). But, as with instructive panegyric, the slippery

¹⁰² Perry (1965) lxxix–lxxx on 3 *epil.* 15: “at least fifty.”

¹⁰³ Fables with teeth: 4.8.1–2; cf. 3.2.

¹⁰⁴ Hardie (2000) 126.

¹⁰⁵ Marin (1989) 34.

¹⁰⁶ Derrida (1981b) 95–8.

¹⁰⁷ Slater (1999) 155.

¹⁰⁸ Especially concerning Cynics: Julian *Oration* 7.207a–208a. 3.19 blurs fable/*χρεία*—Aesop assumes “subversive nature of Cynic criticism”: Relihan (1996) 265; cf. Donzelli (1960) 225–76; Giangrande (1972) 19–22.

slope from praise to blame renders the gift equivocal.¹⁰⁹ Kings/tyrants are not necessarily ideal readers.¹¹⁰ Fable is an “uncertain model of praxis,”¹¹¹ and it can *fail* “precisely because [comparison] is not always safe.”¹¹² Aesop dies when his fable, *comparing* the Delphians to slaves, mortally offends.¹¹³

But is *improbus* (“disrespectful”) Phaedrus an Aesop?¹¹⁴—slave-other seeking to appeal to the tyrant-other.¹¹⁵ Writing Roman literature is an elite preserve, and, for the most part, its exponents’ protestations of poverty and perceived disdain are rhetorical.¹¹⁶ Would it not be more *Roman* to read “Phaedrus to the unnamed reader” of books 1 and 2 in terms of a “Seneca to a Polybius”: “a work of pre-eminent opportunism”?¹¹⁷

tuae sunt partes; fuerunt aliorum prius.

(Phaed. 3 *epil.* 24)

The duty is yours; previously it was another’s.

Do all of Phaedrus’ strategies imply an overly-elaborate model of how to be *harmlessly* noticed?¹¹⁸ Phaedrus constructs himself as a Tiberian writer with his implications of first-hand knowledge at the highest levels.¹¹⁹ We cannot utterly dismiss an attempt to communicate the “wretched uncertainties”¹²⁰ of life with an absentee emperor—but neither can we rule out that a literate freedman wanted to be *even closer* to the emperor and his Greek court.

Moralizing fables, from Greek rhetorical handbooks, flattering to the dead emperor and positive, but not sycophantic, to the current one, anti-Sejanus (but avoiding *Realpolitik*), written by an imperial *libertus*, in

¹⁰⁹ Nagy (1990) 149; Derrida (1981b) 75–6. Reversing slave-to-master dependence? Papademetriou (1997) 55.

¹¹⁰ Steiner (1994) 162–75.

¹¹¹ Keenan (1997) 46.

¹¹² Keenan (1997) 45.

¹¹³ *Life of Aesop* 124–42. Cf. Bartsch (1994) 94 on “attempts to stem and spur simultaneously the interpretative processes of different audiences.”

¹¹⁴ Martial’s *improbis* Phaedrus (3.20.5)—“disrespectful”: Shackleton Bailey (1993) 215; “naughty,” “racy,” “morally reprehensible,” “rascally”: Travis (1940) 579–86.

¹¹⁵ Slave and king exist at social extremes: Bremmer (1983) 304–307. Outsiders voice popular wisdom: Henderson (1976) 10.

¹¹⁶ White (1978) 88–9.

¹¹⁷ Stewart (1953) 85.

¹¹⁸ 2.5 = wrong way? Accessing master as slave “issue”: D’Arms (1991) 179. Accessing Tiberius: Houston (1985) 185.

¹¹⁹ Henderson (2001) 14.

¹²⁰ Williams (1978) 299.

a court full of Greeks, looking back to the other “Golden Age,”¹²¹ and intended to entertain... To what extent might Phaedrus be influenced by (perceptions of) number one’s literary tastes? The Tiberian scene is regarded as a literary wasteland. “His taste was bad.”¹²² His reign produced “uninspired...improving literature,” suitable for foisting on the public.¹²³ Examples of personal patronage are not intended to portray him in a good light: the infamous 200,000 sesterces for a dialogue between a truffle, oyster, thrush and fig-pecker (Suet. *Tib.* 42); the commentary on Timon’s *Silloi* (Diog. Laert. 9.109).¹²⁴

unde angusta et lubrica oratio sub principe qui libertatem metuebat, adulationem oderat.

(Tac. *Ann.* 2.87)

Under a regent who feared *libertas* and detested flattery, speech was constrained and perilous.

Is this an emperor who reads fables or *ought* to read fables?

It is significant that Tiberius’ remarks, so often ridiculing the shortcomings of mankind, are material for the fabulist.¹²⁵

Consider some other anecdotal *testimonia*:¹²⁶ Tiberius’ years in Greece; artistic philhellenism;¹²⁷ (initial) advocacy of the freedom to speak (Suet. *Tib.* 28; cf. *speciem libertatis*, “the appearance of liberty,” 30); interventions in law-courts;¹²⁸ “proper” rhetorical education;¹²⁹ *diritas* (“harshness,” *Tib.* 21.) and loathing of flattery;¹³⁰ miserliness and reluctance to manumit (*Tib.* 46, 47, 48; cf. 2.5, 4.21); desire to improve public morals (*Tib.* 33); “respect” for Augustus;¹³¹ “exile/s”; liking for Campania;

¹²¹ καθ’ ὃν καιρὸν ὁμόφωνα ἦσαν τὰ ζῷα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις (“when animals talked the same language as men,” *Vita Aesopi* 97).

¹²² Butler (1909) 3.

¹²³ Williams (1978) 298.

¹²⁴ Demonstrating a *liking* for literate abuse? Timon “perceived quickly” and “turned his nose up” (Diog. Laert. 9.112).

¹²⁵ Scott (1932) 148.

¹²⁶ Illustrating “attitudes and ideologies”: Saller (1980) 82.

¹²⁷ Suet. *Tib.* 70–1: favorite poets, fluent Greek. Intellectual life: Houston (1985) 179–96. Artistic taste (“bookishness and horror”): Stewart (1977) 76–90. Cf. graphic nature of fables: 1.12.

¹²⁸ Phaedrus’ legal language manipulates meaningful paradigms? Currie (1984) 497–513; Segurado e Campos (2002) 89–118.

¹²⁹ Fable in education: Morgan (1998) 224.

¹³⁰ To Senators (in Greek), *ad servitutem paratos* (“equipped for slavery,” Tac. *Ann.* 3.65).

¹³¹ Shotter (1966) 207–12. Cf. 3.10.

pedantry (Suet. *Aug.* 86)¹³² and pleasure in games-with-grammatists (*Tib.* 56, 70); liking for pithy quips;¹³³ spectacular falling out with Sejanus; and, interestingly, a string of anecdotes illustrating his familiarity with animal “fable”/proverb.

Fable’s low-brow topics in high-brow environments reflect the unequal power relations mediated by the genre.¹³⁴ Bato explained the revolt to Tiberius in fabulistic terms: the Romans guard their sheep with wolves, instead of dogs or shepherds (Cass. Dio 56.16.3). Tiberius claimed (*often*), that ruling Rome was like holding a wolf by the ears (*ut saepe lupum se auribus tenere diceret*, Suet. *Tib.* 25). His friends do not comprehend Rome’s beastliness (*quanta belua esset imperium*, *Tib.* 24) or the “yoking” nature of the “wretched and onerous slavery” forced upon him (*Tib.* 24).¹³⁵ To a governor “fleecing” his population *rescriptsit boni pastoris esse tondere pecus, non deglubere* (“he wrote back that the good shepherd should shear, not flay, his sheep,” Suet. *Tib.* 32; Dio 57.10.5; cf. Babrius 51).¹³⁶ This is the candid and brutally pithy, word-playing “Caesar Tiberius” brilliantly (flatteringly?) rendered by Phaedrus in 2.5.24–5.

The “risk of imperial self-discovery”¹³⁷ is ever present in fables interpreted by a predictably unpredictable reader. Does the fall-out from books 1 and 2 serve as a model for what happens when, like the stag hiding in the ox-stalls to escape the hunters, who is passed over by herdsman, farmhands and even the overseer, you *are* noticed by the “hundred-eyed” master (*ille qui oculos centum habet*, 2.8.18) who “examines thoroughly” (*scrutatur singula*, 24) his own interests (*in rebus suis*, 28)?¹³⁸

¹³² Archaism: Williams (1978) 308.

¹³³ Scaurus’ Atreid allusion: Tac. *Ann.* 6.29; Tiberius: καὶ ἐγὼ οὖν Αἴαντ’ αὐτὸν ποιήσω (“I will make him Ajax,” Cass. Dio 58.24.3–5). *Ludibria seriis permiscere solitus* (“accustomed to blend sport with serious things,” Tac. *Ann.* 6.2); Scott (1932) 139–51; Miller (1968) 1–19; Henderson (2001) 9–31. Suet. *Tib.* 57: a wise-guy at a funeral told corpse to pass message to Augustus...Tiberius put him to death, telling him to tell Augustus himself. Cf. *plerumque stulti, risum dum captant leuem, / graui destringunt alios contumelia, / et sibi nociuum concitant periculum* (“very often, stupid men, seeking a light laugh, satirize others with harsh insults, and stir up injurious danger for themselves,” 1.29.1–3).

¹³⁴ Patterson (1991) 15.

¹³⁵ Phaed. 3.7.27 (starving wolf to domestic dog): *regnare nolo, liber ut non sim mihi*, “I do not want to be king unless I am free.”

¹³⁶ Mullets, crayfish, brambles, peacocks (*Tib.* 60): readily fabulized? Also astrologers (cf. 3.3; *App.* 8); miserliness; Fortune/Fate. Tiberius’ pet serpent devoured by ants *ut uim multitudinis caueret* (“warned against the might of the multitude,” Suet. *Tib.* 72)

¹³⁷ Bartsch (1994) 90. Tiberius *agnoscit hominem; remque intellegit* (“recognizes the man”; “and he understands the state of affairs,” 2.5.19); what fables make you do.

¹³⁸ Hardie (2000) 124: emperor as “potential reader...all-seeing eavesdropper.”

Phaedrus' almost complete lack of critical reception suggests his innovations failed utterly as an artistic exercise.¹³⁹ Is it possible that "success" destroyed the fabulist in a way that Sejanus never could?

...sincerum mihi
candore noto reddas iudicium peto.

(Phaed. 3 *prol.* 62–3).

...I beg that you render sincere judgment with your customary candor.

Be careful what you wish for...Success condemns the fabulist to the "capsulization"¹⁴⁰ which he inflicted on fable by enclosing it within *libelli*: condemned like Ixion, Sisyphus and the company of *Appendix* 7, wretched *sine fine*, to repeat his labors without hope of reprieve: to *establish* rather than *oppose* "the tyranny of conventional wisdom?"¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ All fables remain Aesop's. Quintilian ignores (Colson (1919) 59–61); Seneca overlooks: *non audeo te eo usque producere, ut fabellas quoque et Aesopeos logos, intemptatum Romanis ingenii opus, solita tibi uenustate connectas* ("I daren't push you as far as putting together, with your customary charm, fables and Aesopic tales—work untried by the Roman genius," Sen. *Cons. Polyb.* 8.3). Postgate (1919) 23–4; Perry (1965) lxxix; Henderson (2001) 66, 206 n. 10. Excepting Martial, unattested until Avianus (Cameron (1967) 385–99). Our reception: "slight," "not great poetry," Lewis (1992) 93; "seldom felicitous" innovations: Perry (1965) lxxxvi; "not one of the world's mighty sages," Duff (1964) 122; "not...widely read," Coffey (1976) 98; "harmless," Butler (1909) 3; "under-rated," Ogilvie (1980) 188. Williams (1982) 21: "minor genius."

¹⁴⁰ Noel (1975) 155.

¹⁴¹ *Contra* Aesop: Winkler (1985) 288.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

OUTSIDE AND INSIDE: SENECAN STRATEGIES

James Ker

At the middle point of the younger Seneca's public life stands *De Clementia*, the work which appears to intervene in the politics of the early empire more directly than any other. The act of writing is foregrounded in the first book's first word, *scribere* ("to write"), and in the explanation which follows, setting out the writer's role in relation to his addressee: *scribere de clementia, Nero Caesar, institui, ut quodam modo speculi uice fungerer et te tibi ostenderem peruenturum ad uoluptatem maximam omnium* ("I decided to write about clemency, Nero Caesar, so that I might serve in some way the function of a mirror and might show you to yourself on the way to the greatest of all pleasures," *Clem.* 1.1.1).¹ Seneca's role as mirror is mediated here by writing itself, with Nero being approached as reader (or listener) of a mirror-text. A playful embedding of the reader in the text, in *et te tibi ostenderem peruenturum*, is used to back up the promise of future pleasure, an invitation to read and reread and literally to find "yourself" mirrored in Seneca's writing.²

De Clementia is equally self-conscious about exposing this relationship to a public audience. This is evident particularly at the beginning of book 2, where the metaphor for writing is transposed from mirror to echo:

ut de clementia scriberem, Nero Caesar, una me uox tua maxime conpulit, quam ego non sine admiratione et, cum diceretur, audisse memini et deinde aliis narraſſe, uocem generosam, magni animi, magnae lenitatis, quae non composita nec alienis auribus data subito erupit et bonitatem tuam cum fortuna tua litigantem in medium adduxit.

(Sen. *Clem.* 2.1.1)

My writing about clemency, Nero Caesar, was inspired by an utterance of yours, which I remember having heard with a certain amount of wonder when it was said and having subsequently told to others: a noble utterance, great-spirited, greatly moderate, which was not polished or given

¹ Translations are mine. The text of *De Clementia* is that of Malaspina (2001).

² For a comparable wordplay on *te* as part of a prefatory *captatio*, cf. *ita fac, mi Lucili: uindica te tibi, et tempus...collige et serua* ("That's the way, my Lucilius: reclaim yourself for yourself and your time...gather it up and preserve it," *Ep.* 1.1).

for others' ears, but burst out all of a sudden and brought into plain view the struggle between your goodness and your high position.

This time around, Seneca constructs his act of writing as the public extension of a process that had begun with Nero's private vocalization and was followed by Seneca's relaying of it to outsiders (cf. *aliis*, "to others"; *alienis auribus*, "for others' ears"). The content of the *uox* ("voice"), which Seneca goes on to reveal, is itself interesting: when the praetorian prefect Burrus was requesting that Nero "write" (*scriberes*) his decision about the punishment of two bandits, Nero had exclaimed, "*uellem litteras nescirem*" ("I wish I did not know how to read and write," 2.1.1). In its casting of Nero in the role of reluctant writer, taken together with an earlier reference to the pen as quite literally an instrument of violence (the equestrian Tricho had flogged his son to death and was stabbed by the people with styluses [*graphiis*], 1.15.1), we may see *De Clementia*, an emphatically *written* text, as mirroring, echoing, and meditating on the power of writing in a number of different configurations.

Seneca's repeated reference to the beginnings of his writing at the beginning of book 1 and of book 2 itself creates an interesting effect: whether book 2 should be taken as a residual draft of book 1, as some have suggested, or as belonging to a clear development in a work that probably extended to three books in length, the two moments convey a sense of writing and rewriting, of writing as rehearsal or *meditatio*. In their implicit associations with Narcissus (1.1.1) and Echo (2.1.1), no two passages in a single Senecan text can illustrate better what Habinek has referred to as Seneca's use of "writing as a performance."³ If *De Clementia* has been taken as Seneca's way of signaling to the Roman elite that Nero is in the hands of a competent and pragmatic adviser,⁴ it also reveals Seneca as innovative in developing the potential of writing in relation to the *persona* of the *princeps*, as he anatomizes his political body, in the present text, into *uultus* and *uox*.

This position for the writer may be unique in Seneca's writings: *De Clementia* was classified separately already in antiquity from the main body of Senecan prose, and it has generally been read as an exception, even as an aberration, in Seneca's oeuvre.⁵ Clearly his profile in the work is one reflection of a frequently changing historical identity, in which

³ Habinek (2000) 286–8. I am in debt to Habinek's essay throughout.

⁴ E.g., by Griffin (1976) 137–41.

⁵ E.g., by Momigliano (1969) 251.

he approaches the writing of politics by many paths. In this chapter I will look briefly at the historical context of Seneca's political agency, then survey the range of political rhetoric in his various writings, and finally return to consider more closely the "specular" function of his writing in *De Clementia*.

An Outsider-Insider

In building up a basis for interpreting Seneca's writings, it is imperative to take into account the pattern of his career in relation to the household of the Julio-Claudian emperors, as this can be reconstructed from Tacitus, Suetonius, and Cassius Dio.⁶ His Spanish birth followed by migration to Rome under Augustus, his sojourn in Egypt under Tiberius followed by a return to Rome to take up a quaestorship under Gaius, his success as an orator followed by his near-execution also under Gaius (eluded only due to the rumor that he would die soon from ill health), his intimacy with women of the imperial household sufficient to generate a charge of adultery, and banishment, under Claudius, his recall by Agrippina so that she and Nero *consiliis eiusdem ad spem dominationis uterentur* ("might draw upon his advice to advance their ambitions to power," Tac. *Ann.* 12.8), and his role as adviser to Nero, his arousal of jealousy in potential rivals, and his withdrawal from Nero's court and forced suicide in connection with the Pisonian conspiracy—these are the fluctuations not only of a survivor but of one capable of shifting repeatedly and easily between the center and the edge of Roman politics. Tacitus' most extensive portrayal of Seneca, the famous interview with Nero in which he asks for an *otium post labores* ("retirement after work") like that granted to earlier imperial advisers such as Agrippa and Maecenas and seeks to return the *beneficia* with which Nero has showered him (*Ann.* 14.53–6), is one dramatized episode in Seneca's ongoing trajectory between the inside and the outside, and back again.

It is usually in connection with his status as an outsider-insider that the ancient historians make frequent mention also of Seneca's writing or his *studia*. Gaius' antipathy for Seneca seems to have been based on his oratorical success, and perhaps even his style (Cass. Dio 59.19.7).

⁶ For discussion of the narrative that emerges, see Griffin (1976); Griffin (1974) 1–38. Sources are usefully collected in Trillitzsch (1971) and Faider (1921) 5–107; cf. *PIR* no. 617.

Dio tells of a book (βιβλίον) written by Seneca from Corsica in which he pleaded with Messalina and some of Claudius' freedmen to help have him recalled (Dio 61.10.2), and later recounts how Seneca wrote a satire on the death of Claudius which he entitled *Apocolocyntosis* (60.35.3; in all likelihood corresponding to the extant satire transmitted without this title). The relation between Seneca's insider-position and his role as a writer is most fully elaborated in accounts of the Neronian years, when he was portrayed by a hostile Agrippina as contributing an inept *professoria lingua* ("didactic tongue") to Nero's court corresponding to the *trunca . . . manus* ("maimed hand") of Burrus (*Ann.* 13.14). As Tacitus explains, Nero was the first emperor perceived as relying on *aliena facundia* ("another's eloquence"), with the result that his speeches on clemency during the first year of his reign and the letter sent to the senate to account for the murder of Agrippina in 59 were seen as deriving from Seneca, whether sending the message that Nero was in capable hands and entertaining audiences with *ingenium amoenum et temporis eius auribus accommodatum* ("a pleasing style suited to the ears of his age," *Ann.* 13.3) or exposing Seneca to criticism (14.11). Seneca's expulsion from the court of Nero in 62 was accompanied by accusations from rivals that included his having increased his poetic output (perhaps the tragedies are meant) to cater to a newfound passion of Nero's (*Ann.* 14.52; cf. *Q. Nat.* 6.8: favorable reference to Nero Caesar as poet).

A recurring theme in the Neronian years is Seneca's elevation to the level of a pseudo-*princeps*. This is the accusation of his critics in 62, who claim that *hortorum quoque amoenitate et uillarum magnificentia quasi principem supergrederetur* ("in the pleasantness of his gardens also, and the splendor of his villas, he was virtually surpassing the *princeps*," *Ann.* 14.52). But this status was viewed favorably by some of the conspirators in 65, who favored Seneca, not Calpurnius Piso, as the new *princeps*-to-be; this move would remarkably have made Seneca the first non-Julio-Claudian and first non-Italian emperor, and it had been justified, as Tacitus says, by the expectation that Seneca would have appeal on account of *claritudine uirtutum* ("his renown for his virtues," 15.65)—a phrase suggesting Seneca's philosophical writing. In a more general sense of the term, Seneca during his height of power is referred to by Pliny as *princeps tum eruditorum* ("foremost of men of learning at that time," *HN* 14.51). But Seneca's status as pseudo-*princeps* reflects his perceived connection with the center of power even potentially at moments when he is most on the outside.

These ambiguities inherent in Seneca's profile go some way toward explaining the many characteristics of his writings that have made it difficult or even impossible for modern readers to find a coherent political program there. He presents both positive and negative views of every emperor from Augustus to Nero. He makes stirring allusions to the Roman republic while presenting monarchy as the ideal constitution. His views on participation in politics or withdrawal into *otium* ("leisure") exhibit great or subtle changes from one work to the next. Stoicism appears in his works sometimes as a philosophy of public service, but more often as a system of evaluation in which worldly politics appears to be ranked as an "indifferent." The other pastimes in which Seneca excels, such as viticulture or financial investment, appear sometimes as political strategies, sometimes as alternative, *non*-political sources of social capital. Each of his many genres of writing gives a different portrayal of the political realm, and each approaches its audience differently. His mannered and dramatic style of writing frequently appears to include one or more levels of dissimulation. While each of these complications of Seneca's politics requires its own independent explanation,⁷ as a group they make sense in the light of Seneca's outsider-insider position. He wrote as an opportunist, and the political perspectives of his works are specific to different historical moments in his negotiation of a place either inside or outside of the imperial court.⁸

Uncertain Contexts

It is difficult, however, to be specific about the motives of many of Seneca's individual writings, given our lack of precise contextual information. Our knowledge of Senecan chronology is undermined in most cases by the works' lack of datable references: a reference to the Campanian earthquake as taking place *nonis Februariis...Regulo et Verginio consulibus* ("on the Nones of February...during the consulships of Regulus and Verginius," *NQ* 6.1.2), that is, February 5, 63 CE, is

⁷ Some or all of these features are addressed by Griffin (1976); Griffin (1974) 1–38; Rudich (1997) 17–106; Williams (2003) 1–25.

⁸ For Seneca as "opportunist," Rudich (1997) 17; on his "occasional writing," Momigliano (1969) 244. Both of these scholars offer connected accounts of the relationship between Seneca's writings and moments in his political career, as does Squillante (2003) 159–75.

among the few exceptions.⁹ As is shown most dramatically by a chart in the back of Giancotti's discussion of Senecan chronology,¹⁰ scholars have proposed wildly divergent dates for particular works (for example, 37, 49, and 62 CE for the *Consolatio ad Marciam*). The periods agreed on for some specific works are mostly convincing: under Gaius, *Consolatio ad Marciam*; under Claudius, *Consolatio ad Helviam*, *Consolatio ad Polybium*, and *De Ira*; under Nero, *Apocolocyntosis*, *De Clementia*, *De Vita Beata*, *De Beneficiis*, *Natural Questions*, and *Epistulae Morales*. But there is still considerable room for doubt: a plausible argument has been made for a Tiberian date for the *Consolatio ad Marciam*,¹¹ which might change our understanding of the respectful references to Tiberius in the text (e.g., *Marc.* 15.3); *De Ira* has been distributed over many different time-spans within the reign of Claudius, with book 1 beginning as early as the period prior to Seneca's exile in 41 and book 3 finishing as late as the period following his recall in 43.¹² And while the *Epistulae Morales* appear to have a dramatic date in 62–64 or 63–64, it has recently been suggested that some of the letters were in circulation much earlier,¹³ thus leaving their supposed "Neronian" subtexts less certain.

Interpretation reaches a special level of difficulty in the case of such works as *De Tranquillitate Animi*, *De Otio*, and *De Breuitate Vitae*, each of which presents a subtly different view on political participation but without offering any indication of date.¹⁴ Stylistic dating criteria such as rhythmical patterns in the prose works¹⁵ appear unreliable; and while stylometric principles have been offered for a relative ordering of the tragedies (for example, *Agamemnon*, *Oedipus*, and *Phaedra*: early; *Hercules*, *Medea*, and *Troades*: middle; *Thyestes* and *Phoenissae*: later),¹⁶ their spread within the reigns of Claudius and Nero is relatively uncertain.

Nor do we know enough about the works' circulation to know for certain whether, or how often, they were performed in a *recitatio* that may have *offendisse potentium animos* ("given offense to the powers that

⁹ The year given is itself problematic, since Tacitus gives 62 (*Ann.* 15.22); cf. Wallace-Hadrill (2003) 177–91.

¹⁰ Giancotti (1957) inside back cover.

¹¹ Bellemore (1992) 219–34.

¹² Cf. Fillion-Lahille (1984) 273–84 and Nussbaum (1994) 405 (pre-exile); Viansino (1992) 122 (pre- and post-exile); Harris (2001) 112–23, 251 (post-exile).

¹³ Sosin (1999) 295.

¹⁴ Williams (2003) 2–3, discussing the uncertain date of *De Breuitate Vitae* (either 49 or 62), makes a good case for moving beyond such questions.

¹⁵ E.g., the analyses of Bourgery (1910) 167–72.

¹⁶ By Fitch (2002) 12; Fitch (1981) 65–70.

be," Tac. *Dial.* 2.1) or even attended by, say, a Claudius or Nero (cf. Plin. *Ep.* 1.13.3; Suet. *Vita Luc.*). This matters greatly. In the case of the tragedies, for instance, different forms of reception inevitably affect our sense of their political potential.¹⁷ And however tempting it may be to see intended parallels between Senecan tragic tyrants and Nero, we must acknowledge the possibility of the thesis suggested by Ferri in his recent edition of the anonymous play *Octavia*: that it was the *Octavia*, with its posthumous, Flavian depictions of Seneca in dramatic conflict with a tyrannical Nero, which first openly broached the interpretation that specific tragedies had been veiled critiques of Nero all along.¹⁸ A similar argument might also be made about the influence of the historians, who are the sources for what we *think* we know about Seneca the statesman: in their accounts there is always the risk that we are getting a post-Neronian Seneca, and that assumptions about the strategic purposes of Seneca's prose writings, like those about the tragedies, are the residue of a *damnatio memoriae*.

Rhetoric and Imperial Community

There are advantages in approaching the politics of Senecan writing without an overwhelming focus on diachronic explanation. This option clears the way for questions which deal with both the formal and the sociological dimensions of his writing. What rhetorical possibilities did Seneca utilize in writing imperial politics? And what were the potential effects of these rhetorical choices upon Rome's political community? These questions will be addressed in tandem as we proceed.

Seneca and any other writer who made reference to politics in the early empire faced distinctive challenges and constraints. First, there was an awareness of new dangers faced by writers exercising full freedom of speech: the opening of Seneca's *Consolatio ad Marciam*, in its images of Roman literature in flames (cf. *magna illorum pars arserat*, *Marc.* 1.3) and of the historian Cremutius Cordus, *homo ingenio animo manu liber* ("a man free in his mind, his spirit, his hand," 1.3), serves as an immediate reminder of this, however much Seneca would claim elsewhere: *maluerim*

¹⁷ Multiple notions of performance, however, are usefully discussed by Littlewood (2004) 2–5. The basic debate over performance versus recitation is surveyed by Fitch (2000) 1–12.

¹⁸ Ferri (2003) 70.

ueris offendere quam placere adulando (“I would prefer to cause offense with the truth than to please by flattery,” *Clem.* 2.1.2). Second, the spaces available for public speech had changed greatly: elite Romans exercised their rhetorical abilities less in the forum or senate than in the semi-public setting of the declamation school or literary *recitatio*, or in the solitary scene of writing; this required new types of engagement with the audience of literature.¹⁹ Third, there was a new suspicion surrounding the interpretation of speech: the contradictions between language and reality which were basic to the existence of the principate enhanced the possibility of fissures between the surface meaning of a text and the writer’s possible intent.²⁰ Fourth, a new range of functions emerged for writing itself. Literary accomplishment could serve as an avenue for inclusion in literary circles close to the emperor, just as failures could result in the chilling effect of *frigus* and social exclusion. The rhetorical goal of literature could often center on the therapy of a politically dispossessed elite, turning them toward spiritualism, cosmopolitanism, or alternative sources of symbolic authority.²¹ At the same time, writing could advertise techniques for elite survival and reproduction amid the challenges of imperial politics, or could supply new models and metaphors by which the *princeps* and elite might relate to one another—the process of “constructing autocracy,” which Roller has illustrated in Julio-Claudian writers including Lucan and Seneca.²²

It is now widely recognized that the most effective avenue for writing politics at this time was perceived to be a moralizing discourse, whether grounded in philosophical theory, in satire, or in the invocation of *mos maiorum*.²³ Moralism offered a way to stabilize the behavior of both an emperor and an elite whose power relationship was outside of the definitions of law and legalism.²⁴ Certain ethical virtues were of outright ideological value to both parties, or were the best way to maintain a political life: Griffin has emphasized Seneca’s focus on “horizontal” gift-giving between emperor and elite in *De Beneficiis*, while Harris has highlighted the form of “civilizing process” inherent in the focus on

¹⁹ For a general sketch of this shift, Dupont (1997) 44–59.

²⁰ Cf. Rudich (1997) 66.

²¹ Cf. Williams (2003) 7–10. Of first-century philosophers, Momigliano (1969) 239 observes that “[t]hey amused, they taught, they consoled, above all they consoled.”

²² Roller (2001).

²³ E.g., by Edwards (1993) 32; Habinek (2000) 288–9; Roller (2001) 64–126.

²⁴ Cf. Griffin (1976) 391.

anger-control in *De Ira*.²⁵ Moralism also supplied a discourse within which sub-groups among the imperial elite could express a pseudo-aristocratic exclusivity without literal reference to material wealth or political position—what Habinek has termed, for Seneca, an “aristocracy of virtue”²⁶—or, *mutatis mutandis*, could undermine the *dignitas* of others by negative moralizing attacks. Indeed, moralism could supply a metaphorical substitute for the world: an acquisition of “true wealth” through philosophy; an exercise of *uirtus* (“courage”), once Rome’s foremost military value, in the private contexts of *otium*; a “censorship” exercised over the self; an intellectual *res publica* allowing political action through contemplation of nature alone. All of this served as a basis for self-care and self-evaluation safe from the real-world threats posed by *Fortuna*.²⁷ Lastly, moralism provided a safe level of generality through which to comment on politics: in its depiction of the self amid a de-historicized realm of values and *exempla*—or of tragedy’s age-old myths—it could generally deny that any individuals or groups, living or dead, were being referred to. Thus, it circumvented the limits on freedom of speech which Cremutius Cordus’ historiography, for instance, had been perceived as transgressing. It is not by accident that Seneca’s defining mode of moralism almost never ventures into contemporary narrative, and indeed that his wide repertoire of genres excludes the writing of history.²⁸

Rhetorical Paths Taken

Across his chosen genres, Seneca uses a wide array of devices to engage with politics, in accordance with his various outsider and insider positions and with the challenges and constraints of imperial writing. The following survey is necessarily selective, and is primarily intended to demonstrate the ingenuity with which he adapted existing forms and conventions to appeal to the political subjectivity of his readers. I have opted for categories which are somewhat open-ended, since they invite us to perceive connections and parallels between different areas of a

²⁵ Griffin (2003b) 114; Harris (2001) 150, 201–28.

²⁶ Habinek (1998) 137–50.

²⁷ On self-care see Foucault (1988) 37–68, 81–95.

²⁸ On Seneca and historiography see Armisen-Marchetti (1995) 150–67; Castagna (1991) 89–117.

diverse oeuvre. My goal is less to identify specific political messages than to outline a general set of Senecan strategies.

Addressees

Each of Seneca's prose works is dedicated to a specific individual, and deals with a moral topic that is ostensibly of special relevance to that person. But it has long been recognized that most of the recipients are intimately associated with official politics: for example, his brother Novatus/Gallio (governor of Achaëa), Annaeus Serenus (*praefectus uigilum*, "prefect of the watch"), Lucilius (procurator in Sicily), Pompeius Paulinus (*praefectus annonae*, "prefect of the corn supply").²⁹ In some cases, the addressee implicitly provides Seneca the outsider with a rhetorical point of reference within the imperial household (e.g., *Consolatio ad Polybium*, addressed to Claudius' freedman), while in other cases it implicitly provides an insider Seneca with an opportunity to reenact his patronage over others (e.g., Aebutius Liberalis in *De Beneficiis*) or to distance himself from the emperor (e.g., Paulinus in *De Breuitate Vitae*). In every case the pragmatics of the text as a communication between moral adviser and advisee means that politics is addressed only at a tangent, and never as the primary object. Yet its political potential is clear even in the case of female addressees such as Marcia, whose conception by Seneca *in persona patris* (1.2; her father being Cremutius Cordus) is rendered symbolic of a collective Roman history in the transition from republic to empire (e.g., *ingenium patris sui . . . in usum hominum reduxisti*, "you brought your father's talent back into public possession," 1.3), and also allows him to disown his own possible earlier connections to Sejanus, who had prosecuted Cremutius.³⁰

Augustan Memories and Models

Recent studies have noted the various ways in which the Augustan poetry of (especially) Ovid, Virgil, and Horace is alluded to or transformed in Senecan tragedy.³¹ Seneca's prose works equally engage with literary and political aspects of the post-Augustan subjectivity of the reader. Not only is Seneca the only author from the time of Nero to

²⁹ Helvia, as Mazzoli (1997) 347 points out, is the only real exception. See also Roper (1979) 346–57.

³⁰ For the latter theory, see the important article of Stewart (1953) 70–85.

³¹ E.g., Tarrant (1978) 213–63.

make reference to Augustus at all,³² but Augustus features prominently in several works as a paradigm *princeps* with both good and bad attributes. One of the more distinctive aspects of Seneca's engagement with Augustus is his periodization between the early Octavian/Augustus of the proscriptions and civil wars and the late Augustus of the stable principate. In the *Consolatio ad Marciam*, the earlier period is evoked through Octavia's melancholic mourning over Marcellus' death, while the later period is idealized through Livia's courageous acceptance of the death of Drusus (*Marc.* 2–3). Seneca is the first writer to locate the principate in an imperial *aula* ("court"),³³ and the only author outside of the *Consolatio ad Liuiam* to use Livia as an *exemplum uirtutis* ("a paradigm of virtue"), at *Consolatio ad Marciam* 4–6.1,³⁴ where the advisory role of Augustus' philosopher Areus appears to prefigure his own role as an imperial insider. Thus, he self-consciously sprinkles moral choices with political signifiers.

Politics through Physiognomy

While Seneca's works are silent on constitutional procedures, they provide vivid portrayals of the way in which bodies, and parts of bodies, take on politically significant roles. Bodies often function as metonyms for events as an alternative to full description. This may be seen most vividly in the tragedies, where the body politic is encoded in vivid descriptions, such as the young priestess Manto's ecphrasis of an ominous sacrifice in *Oedipus*: *genitor, horresco inteuns: / libata Bacchi dona permutat cruor / ambitque densus regium fumus caput* ("father, I shudder to see it: the wine libations are exchanged for blood, and a thick fog surrounds the head of the king," *Oed.* 323–5). In *De Ira*, it is the human face which provides a bridge between the moral and the political: as Mazzoli has emphasized, the face of the *princeps* is a *locus* where morality takes on a public and therefore political role (e.g., *alii adfectus apparent, hic eminet*, "the other emotions are detectable, whereas this one [i.e., anger] is conspicuous," 1.1.5).³⁵ But political critiques broached in this way are couched in the language of aesthetics and decorum, and once again relate to politics only obliquely.

³² Cf. Jal (1957) 261.

³³ Wallace-Hadrill (1996) 283.

³⁴ Cf. Litchfield (1914) 53–5.

³⁵ Mazzoli (2003) 128–30.

Authoritative Voices

Seneca frequently takes on the voices of others through the device of *sermocinatio*, or *prosopopoeia*. This applies to the changing voices of the tragic characters and choruses, but equally of the prose works. Sometimes the Stoic sage speaks, or a republican hero eloquently confronts death or *Fortuna*, but often the voice belongs to an explicitly imperial figure: in the *Apocolocyntosis* Seneca takes on the voice of the recently deceased Claudius and then the voice of Augustus castigating him, framing this all within a parody of the secretarial voice of the *acta diurna* (*Apocol.* 4.3, 10–11, 1.1). The most vivid instance, however, comes in *Consolatio ad Polybium*, where Seneca takes on the voice of the *living* Claudius (14.2–16.3). Each of these voices functions differently in the way that it positions Seneca in relation to the imperial household, securing him access to certain *loci* of authority, or establishing distance. In addition, his continual change of voice has the function of destabilizing his own authorial *persona*, which Edwards has identified as a deliberate strategy in the *Epistulae Morales*, appropriate among the unpredictable personalities of the imperial court.³⁶

Reader as Participant

Seneca's strategies for writing politics place a special burden on the reader: if a political meaning is divined from his writings, whether from the person of the addressee, Augustan paradigms, the workings of the court, depictions of bodies, authoritative voices, or anything else, the reader must be complicit in deriving this meaning³⁷—and in many cases must be prepared to read against the panegyric code. At the same time, however, the reader herself/himself is swept up in the moral and political drama of the text as a spectator: for the tragedies (in particular, *Thyestes*), Schiesaro has emphasized a form of reader-participation, where the “audience,” being exposed to early hints of what is to come, “could (should) leave. By continuing to watch, it can no longer claim innocence. It is, in effect, an accomplice to the *nefas* on the stage.”³⁸ In the prose works, Seneca's indeterminate interlocutor functions as a “textual surrogate” for the addressee and the reader.³⁹ In

³⁶ Edwards (1997) 23–38.

³⁷ Cf. Rudich (1997) 11.

³⁸ Schiesaro (2003) 183.

³⁹ Williams (2003) 27.

either case, the reader adopts the position of spectator *and* participant, whether on the outside or the inside of politics.

Cryptic, Silent, and Anonymous Reference

Some modern readers of Seneca have wanted to decode his language to reveal elaborate allegories of contemporary events, and in some cases have taken this much too far to be credible.⁴⁰ There have been more convincing attempts to read a reference to Nero in the *Epistulae Morales*: *agite dis immortalibus gratias quod eum docetis esse crudelem qui non potest discere* ("give thanks to the immortal gods that you are teaching someone to be cruel who cannot learn," 7.5).⁴¹ Although this seems to cohere with the theory that Seneca is ironically reminiscing over the time when Nero, under his tutelage, *neminem occidit, ne noxiorum quidem* ("had no one killed [in the amphitheater], not even criminals," Suet. *Nero* 12.1),⁴² the suggestion has never been fully satisfying. The *meridianum spectaculum*, in particular, is more redolent of Claudius than Nero (cf. Suet. *Claud.* 34.2). In some cases, however, persuasive arguments have been made about the relationship between specific passages and contemporary events: Champlin has argued that the section of the *Apocolocyntosis* in which Phoebus prophesies the Golden Age and Nero as a second Apollo, is an insertion that must be dated after mid-59, when Nero first identified himself with Apollo; he also argues that a section of Seneca's letter 115 is a thinly veiled critique of Nero's "solar ideology."⁴³ This may be put together with Henderson's recent reading of the letters, where the absence of explicit references to Nero is a damning silence.⁴⁴

Doubles

Seneca sometimes appears to mediate his references through a contemporary person or event that stands at one remove, either temporally or spatially. In the letters, his reminiscences of the plights of Servilius Vatia (*Ep.* 55.3) and of the poet Iulius Montanus (122.11), both of

⁴⁰ E.g., Bishop (1985).

⁴¹ E.g., recently by Scarpat (1975) 128–9, though the suggestion goes back to Lipsius. Griffin (1976) 360 n. 1 is not persuaded.

⁴² Cf. Scarpat (1975) 126.

⁴³ Champlin (2003b) 276–83 on the *Apocolocyntosis*; Champlin (2000a) 127–8 on *Ep.* 115.12–3.

⁴⁴ Henderson (2004).

whom suffered a rise and fall in favor under Tiberius, would seem to be easily adaptable by analogy to the fate of Seneca himself under Nero. Other figures also, such as Lucilius, Annaeus Serenus, and a certain Senecio who suffered a sudden death (*Ep.* 101.1–4), offer diminutive versions of Lucius Annaeus Seneca and allegorize the endgames of his political life. There can be no doubt that Seneca's successive critiques of *deceased* emperors, such as Gaius in *De Ira*, may routinely be read as warnings for present emperors—in the case of *De Ira*, a response to a concern with Claudius' anger which we see reflected in Claudius' own decree about his *ira/iracundia* (Suet. *Claud.* 38.1). In a geographic doubling, Seneca's letter 91 talks exclusively about the fire at Lyons in 64 CE, with conspicuous silence on the fire at Rome not more than a few months prior.⁴⁵ The consoling remarks to Liberalis and Lucilius on Lyons' loss should be read as an intervention in the Roman people's collective bereavement—the same role he conspicuously sought to occupy in consoling the people of Campania after the earthquake of 62/63 in *Natural Questions* 6.

A Rhetoric of Geography and Landscape

While his works are arrestingly silent on the city of Rome, whose topography authors such as Cicero and Livy had written and rewritten to great political effect, political messages are easy to surmise from Seneca's movements beyond the city. His letter 55 written from the villa of Vatia not far from Baiae was read by Maiuri as a solemn return to the region of Agrippina's murder;⁴⁶ and may constitute a kind of retraction. Letter 86 written from Scipio Africanus' villa at Liternum invites comparison of Seneca's post-career exile to that of Scipio after he became perceived as too powerful for Rome. A more radical rewriting of geography can be found in Seneca's earlier exile: in the *Consolatio ad Helviam*, he inverts the cultural hierarchy between Rome and Corsica by representing Rome as a city of exiles, and the exile of a virtuous man as a metaphorical migration of "Rome" itself to whatever remote site he goes to (7–8)—clear criticism of the Claudian regime. In the tragedies, the much-celebrated prominence of landscapes⁴⁷ frequently has a political dimension: in *Thyestes*, the children are taken to a place

⁴⁵ Cf. Bedon (1991) 45–61.

⁴⁶ Maiuri (1957) 79–83.

⁴⁷ Discussed by, e.g., Segal (1983) 172–87; Littlewood (2004) 57–70.

within the imperial palace where *arcana in imo regio secessu iacet, / alta uetustum ualle compescens nemus, / penetrale regni* (“a dark zone lies in the deepest recesses, hemming an age-old grove in a deep valley, the inner sanctum of the kingdom,” 650–2). Here the presence the triumphal spoils of the Argive kings (cf. *de triumpho... barbarico*, 664) intermingles the standard *locus horridus* with the ambiance of a Roman imperial court.⁴⁸ A more complex political geography is engaged in the *Troades*, given Nero’s deployment of the Trojan myth as part of his own cultural ideology.⁴⁹

Categories

Seneca’s philosophical background provides him with a range of different abstract frameworks by which to evaluate persons or their actions, and he frequently uses these to interpret political activity or to reassess the value of participation altogether. His critique of the so-called *occupati* in *De Breuitate Vitae*, for example, is predicated on the traditional model of “lifestyles” (*bioi*) in which the political, economic, and other ways of life are ranked as “mere existence” (*esse*) below the philosophical way of life, ranked as real “living” (*uiuere*, e.g., 7.10). In the same work, an additional, mind-body dichotomy comes into play in Seneca’s advice to Paulinus to quit his post as *praefectus annonae*, concerned with accounting for the public food supply (*ratio publici frumenti*), and to account instead for his own moral life (*ratio uitae suae*, 18.3). *De Otio* presents the famous distinction between the local *res publica* and the cosmic *res publica*, with the latter constituting a more fertile ground for productive political action, which can be accomplished even through contemplation alone (4). Seneca’s other evaluative schemes include macrocosmic spatial perspectives, such as the “view from above” which makes mortal boundaries seem ridiculous (*NQ* 1 *praef.* 9),⁵⁰ and the miniature space of the *cubiculum* (“private room”), where the contemplator can accomplish deeds that are both *humana* and *diuina*, or are *maiora* (“greater”) than those accomplished in the forum (e.g., *Ep.* 8.6).

⁴⁸ Cf. commentary in Tarrant (1985) 184–5.

⁴⁹ Cf. Boyle (1997) 91.

⁵⁰ On the “view from above,” Williams (2003) 10–2.

Specular Writing in De Clementia

Many of these same rhetorical paths are adopted by Seneca in *De Clementia*,⁵¹ but there they are subsumed in turn by the powerful notion of the text as *speculum* (“mirror”):

scribere de clementia, Nero Caesar, institui, ut quodam modo speculi uice fungerer et te tibi ostenderem peruenturum ad uoluptatem maximam omnium.

(Sen. *Clem.* 1.1.1)

I decided to write about clemency, Nero Caesar, so that I might serve in some way the function of a mirror and might show you to yourself on the way to the greatest of all pleasures.

A mirror gives the viewer access to an image of him/herself that he/she cannot normally perceive. Various specific therapeutic uses of mirrors had developed in the philosophical tradition around the perception of the externally manifested self.⁵² Socrates himself had supposedly urged the use of a mirror *ad disciplinam morum* (“to train behavior”): an attractive person would be inspired to emulate their external form in their moral actions, an ugly person to transcend it (cf. Apul. *Apol.* 15). Seneca alludes to this practice in *Natural Questions*, explaining that *inuenta sunt specula ut homo ipse se nosset* (“mirrors were discovered so that man could know himself,” 1.17.4). In the same section, Seneca also mentions something which is especially relevant to Nero at the time when *De Clementia* was written: that the mirror can be used to remind the *iuuenis* (“young man”) of his youth, as being *tempus . . . discendi et fortia audendi* (“the time to learn and to undertake brave deeds,” 1.17.2). In *De Ira* also, Seneca alludes to a slightly different use of the mirror: the Roman philosopher Sextius, he reports, believed it was useful therapy to show an angry man the image of his own bestialized face while angry, and thereby shock him toward humanity (2.36.1–3). Seneca’s role as a “mirror” for Nero puts him generally within this therapeutic tradition, with the mirror metaphor registering the function of writing as a protreptic or exemplary device.

There is always some work involved on the part of a mirror’s viewer even in the act of self-recognition: the project of “know thyself” is

⁵¹ For text and commentary, Malaspina (2001); useful discussions in Griffin (1976) 129–71; Mazzoli (2003) 123–38.

⁵² Senecan catoptrics are discussed by Leitão (1998) 127–60; Bartsch (2000) 70–97.

mediated by a representation. Although the image can be relatively transparent in its relation to the referent, it always retains some fictive qualities and often represents the self in a way that it is an effort to recognize, or which brings with it an implied role or a surprise. This is what Umberto Eco refers to as a “semiotic” function of the mirror, when the mirror gives something other than “an absolute double of the stimulating field.”⁵³ Sometimes the gap between viewer and image is so wide that to embrace the image is less an act of recognition than the act of identifying with something initially perceived as alien to the self. And indeed it is in this area that *De Clementia* is quite open-ended. Given that the text is conceived of as a mirror, the reader-viewer is implicitly invited to relate to persons and objects mentioned in the text (perhaps even the text itself) in an effort of self-identification.

Nero and Nero

The degree-zero of self-recognition in *De Clementia* is the demand for Nero to accept that his existing record of good governance (which Seneca suggests ought to give him a good conscience) provides a true image of who he is. By continuing this type of behavior into the future, Seneca explains, Nero will show that the image corresponds to a *naturalis bonitas* (“natural goodness”) and not a temporary theatrical mask (*persona*, 1.1.6). This is the question that is on the mind of the people as they look at Nero (1.1.7–9): if Nero accepts the image—if he identifies with what the mirror shows him—it not only promises future pleasure to the *princeps* himself but could be taken to augur also a prosperous *saeculum* (“age”) extending into the future (cf. 1.13.5; 2.1.3–4).

Nero and the Universally Powerful Body

In Seneca’s mirror, however, Nero will be able to recognize himself only through identifying with an imaged self whose power extends through the world. The speech of self-recognition which he puts into Nero’s mouth begins by asking: *egone ex omnibus mortalibus placui electusque sum qui in terris deorum uice fungerer? ego uitae necisque gentibus arbiter?* (“Was I of all mortals found pleasing and selected to serve the function of the gods on earth? Am I the judge of life and death for the world’s nations?” *Clem.* 1.1.2). In the rhetorical questions that follow, Seneca breaks down the

⁵³ Eco (1984) 210; cf. 202.

notion of the all-powerful and god-like “I” into the different channels through which its power takes effect in the world (1.1.2):

qualem quisque sortem statumque habeat, in mea manu positum est; quid cuique mortalium fortuna datum uelit, meo ore pronuntiat; ex nostro responso laetitiae causas populi urbesque concipiunt; nulla pars usquam nisi uolente propitioque me floret; haec tot milia gladiatorum, quae pax mea comprimit, ad nutum meum stringentur...

(Sen. *Clem.* 1.1.2)

Each man’s fate and standing are placed *in my hand*. What Fortune wants given to each mortal person, she announces *through my mouth*. Populations and cities are inspired to celebrate *by our replies*. No part flourishes anywhere without *my wanting it and favoring it*. These countless swords which my peace is suppressing, will be drawn *at my nod*...

This inventory of the “I” of the *princeps* is distinctive in its plethora of body-parts: it gives a systematic set of correlations between the extent of the Roman empire and the gestures of the *princeps*’ own physical and communicative gestures. (It is also difficult to ignore that these rhetorical questions play upon Seneca’s role as Nero’s ventriloquist, and thus identify Seneca himself with universal power).⁵⁴

Nero and Augustus

Nero must also identify himself with certain idealized figures such as the good king (contrasted with the tyrant) or the good father, and dis-identify with the tyrant and slave-master.⁵⁵ Initially, Seneca seeks to turn Nero toward himself as a model, saying, for instance: *nemo iam diuum Augustum nec Ti. Caesaris prima tempora loquitur nec, quod te imitari uelit, exemplar extra te quaerit* (“no one now speaks of the divine Augustus or the early period of Tiberius Caesar: no one looks beyond you yourself for a model for you to follow,” 1.1.6). But a major example in the middle of book 1 (1.9–11) is Augustus’ eventual fulfillment of the role of “god,” “good *princeps*,” and *pater patriae* (1.10.3), and here we see Seneca asking Nero to identify with the better attributes of his great-great-grandfather. Seneca recounts how Augustus, who up till then had paved his way with blood, took the advice of Livia his wife to deal with the suspected conspirator Cinna in a new way, and exercised clemency thereafter (1.11.1).

⁵⁴ Cf. Tac. *Ann.* 13.14. Leitão (1998) 156 also emphasizes the various implications of Seneca himself *as* the image in which Nero is to see himself.

⁵⁵ Cf. Roller (2001) 239–47.

Augustus' moment of transition itself pivots on a scene of self-interrogation, almost as if *he* were looking in a mirror and *ceasing* to identify with his erstwhile self: *ego sum nobilibus adulescentulis expositum caput in quod mucrones acuunt: non est tanti uita si, ut ego non peream, tam multa perdenda sunt* ("I am the exposed *head* against which the sons of the nobility are sharpening their sword-points. My life is not worth so much if so many things must be destroyed to prevent my being killed," 1.9.5). Nero, then, is presented with the image of his ancestor dis-identifying with one mirror-image of himself (more specifically, of himself as a vulnerable "head") in order to take on another, the image of a *mitis princeps*; and Seneca presents this as the basis of his divinity (cf. 1.10.3). To the extent that the eighteen-year-old Nero identifies with this image of Augustus looking in *his* mirror, he advances directly to the state of maturity which it took Augustus years to reach (Augustus did not use clemency until he was *senex aut iam in senectutem annis uergentibus*, "an old man or with his years now turning toward old age," 1.11.1). This is the desired effect of the Senecan mirror-discourse: to have Nero embrace his future mature self, as imaged in the past paradigm of the mature Augustus.

Nero and Alexander

One figure standing in clear opposition to Augustus is the tyrannical figure of the juvenile Alexander, whom Seneca apostrophizes in a discussion of cruelty:

quid enim interest, oro te, Alexander, leoni Lysimachum obicias an ipse laceres dentibus tuis? tuum illud os est, tua illa feritas. o quam cuperes tibi potius unguis esse, tibi rictum illum edendorum hominum capacem! non exigimus a te, ut manus ista, exitium familiare certissimum, ulli salutaris sit, ut iste animus ferox, insatiabile gentium malum, citra sanguinem caedemque satietur; clementia iam vocatur, ad occidendum amicum cum carnifex inter homines eligitur.

(Sen. *Clem.* 1.25.1)

For what difference is there, I ask you, Alexander, whether you throw Lysimachus to the *lion* or tear him apart yourself *with your own teeth*? It's *yours*, that *mouth*, it's *yours*, that *brutality*. How you would have loved for *yourself* to have *claws*, for *yourself* to have that *bite* capable of devouring human beings! We're not asking that that friend-and-family-killing *hand* of yours be *beneficial* to anyone, or that your fierce, greedy and genocidal *mind* satisfy itself without shedding blood or slaughtering: in your case, it is called "clemency" when the executioner who is to kill your friend is chosen from the *human* race.

Alexander is identified with subhuman bestiality rather than superhuman divinity—and thereby represents the exact inverse of the mature Augustus. There is also a vivid contrast here with Seneca's "*egone...*?" speech for Nero (1.1.2), in which the inventory of body-parts had been presented as a mapping out of a god-like political power over the world: here Alexander is shown to have effectively brought about an alternative mapping out of his body onto the lion's, as an instrument of violent destruction of the bodies of others and even of cannibalism of a sort. Seneca's models for Nero, then, are individuals whose own behavior had depended crucially on their identifying and dis-identifying with specific external manifestations of themselves as gods or beasts, the categories contiguous with humanity on the *scala naturae*.

Nero and the People

If Nero is to exercise *clementia*, it is above all the people of whom he needs to be conscious. That the people should be within Nero's purview *as he looks in the mirror* is suggested by Seneca's opening statement that

...iuvat inspicere et circumire bonam conscientiam, tum inmittere oculos in hanc immensam multitudinem discordem, seditiosam, inpotentem, in perniciem alienam suamque pariter exultaturam, si hoc iugum fregit...

(Sen. *Clem.* 1.1.1)

...it is pleasing to observe and inspect one's good conscience, and then to cast one's eyes over this immense mob: discordant, revolutionary, and out of control; it is likely to rise up both to its own ruin and to the ruin of others equally, should it break this yoke...

The emphasis on a ruin that is *alienam suamque pariter* ("both its own and that of others") conjoins the fate of Nero with that of the Roman populace: in looking at their fate, he ought to see his own. This reflects the essential *gratia* ("reciprocity," 1.1.5) which Seneca will recommend as part of the ideal relationship between the *princeps* and people. Indeed, Seneca formulates this reciprocity in the symmetrical terms of *unus homo...uni homini* ("one human being...to one human being," 1.1.5; cf. 2.6.2), and thereby allows the basic *philanthropeia* that underlies clemency to be understood as a *specular* relation.

If Seneca invites Nero to identify with the people, he does this in part to facilitate the people's identification *with him*, in a circle of reciprocity. Seneca frequently reminds Nero that he himself is the object of the people's gaze, likening him for instance to the rising sun which

is seen by one and all (1.8.4). And while *clementia* is a virtue that necessarily implies a power-hierarchy of the pardoner over the pardoned (cf. 1.3.3), Seneca urges Nero to be conscious of the people's perception of his position: *illius demum magnitudo stabilis fundataque est quem omnes tam supra se esse quam pro se sciunt* ("that man's grandeur is steady and sound whom everyone knows to be as much *for* them as *above* them," 1.3.3). The people's sense of the *princeps* as *pro se* ("for them") will evidently make it more likely that they will reciprocate *pro illo* ("for him," 1.3.3). As a result of this *consensus* (1.3.4), they will even, he says, *substernere corpora sua* ("throw their bodies down," 1.3.3) and *multis mortibus unam animam redimere* ("purchase [his] one soul/life with [their] many deaths," 1.3.4). These literal references to the military *corpora* of the people and the *una anima* of the *princeps* are soon converted into Seneca's famous simile comparing the people to a body and the *princeps* to its soul or its head:

quemadmodum totum corpus animo deseruit et, cum hoc tanto maius tantoque speciosius sit, ille in occulto maneat tenuis et in qua sede latitet incertus, tamen manus, pedes, oculi negotium illi gerunt, illum haec cutis munit, illius iussu iacemus aut inquieti discurrimus... sic haec immensa multitudo unius animae circumdata illius spiritu regitur, illius ratione flectitur pressura se ac fractura uiribus suis, nisi consilio sustineretur.

(Sen. *Clem.* 1.3.5)

Just as the whole body serves the mind and, even though the one is so much bigger and more visible, while the other lurks unseen and slender and with its hiding place unable to be precisely located, still the hands, feet, and eyes do [the mind's] work, this skin protects [the mind], and we lie or run about restlessly by [the mind's] command... in the same way, this immense mob, surrounding a single man's soul, is ruled by his breath and is steered by his reason, being likely to crush and break itself by its own strength unless it be maintained by wise counsel.

The simile conveys both the superiority of the *princeps* and the codependency between *princeps* and people, but the codependency is foregrounded: Seneca's characteristic inventory of body parts this time refers to *the people themselves*, making it necessary for Nero to include them in his conception of himself. The conclusion drawn from the simile is that every other-oriented act is also a self-oriented act: *nam, si... tu animus rei publicae es, illa corpus tuum, uides, ut puto, quam necessaria sit clementia: tibi enim parcis, cum uideris alteri parcere* ("for if... you are the republic's mind, and it is your body, you see, I think, how necessary clemency is: for when you seem to spare the other, you are sparing yourself," 1.5.1).

Nero and the Empire

The specular aspect of the mind-body relationship is most explicit at the beginning of book 2, where Seneca sketches out an idealized future for the “body of the empire”: *tradetur ista animi tui mansuetudo diffundeturque paulatim per omne imperii corpus, et cuncta in similitudinem tuam formabuntur* (“that mildness of your mind will be transmitted and disseminated gradually through the whole massive body of the empire, and everything will be formed in your likeness,” 2.2.1). This futuristic vision centers on the notion that Nero’s influence throughout the empire will occur through *assimilation*. Seneca thus subsumes Nero’s relationship to the empire within the mirror-relation: Nero is to see the body of the empire as a reflection of himself.

Speculum and Spying

Up to this point, we have approached Seneca’s role as *speculum* to Nero exclusively through the notion that he is showing reflections, that he is helping the viewer to identify some other person or object with himself. But *speculum* belongs to a semantic field which is not limited to mirror-mediated vision: terms such as *specula* (“lookout, watchtower”), *speculari* (“spy upon, observe”), *specularia* (“windows”), and *speculator* (“spy, scout”) denote different devices and practices of surveillance, ranging from the role of the *speculator* as a kind of proxy spectator to the *specula* as an elevated position from which more can be seen and news can be relayed with fire signals across great distances (cf. the usages at Plaut. *Aul.* 605; Varro, *Ling.* 6.82.7; Liv. 21.49.10). One aspect of this is used in a reference to the emperor Trajan by Pliny, which describes a slightly alternative project to that of Seneca:

nam praecipere qualis esse debeat princeps, pulchrum quidem sed onerosum ac prope superbum est; laudare uero optimum principem ac per hoc posteris uelut e specula lumen quod sequantur ostendere, idem utilitatis habet adrogantiae nihil.

(Plin. *Ep.* 3.18.3)

To teach how the *princeps* ought to be is certainly noble, but it is imposing and almost arrogant. But to praise an excellent *princeps* and thereby to point out a light, as it were, from a signal-tower, for posterity to follow, is equally useful and lacks arrogance altogether.

Pliny, then, uses the elevated position of the *specula* to characterize the visibility of the *princeps* as an *exemplar*. Even if Pliny criticizes the notion of directly teaching the *princeps*, what he suggests instead is certainly

very close to Seneca's characterization of Nero as a visible model, and may help us to see that the assimilation he will inspire is "specular" in more than the mirror sense.

We may close by noting one further characteristic of this whole semantic field: the notion of secrecy, whether looking from a position of secrecy and safety (e.g., *ex longinquo tutoque speculetur quos conlisit, Ira*, "from a safe distance looks upon those whom he has destroyed," 2.29.2), piercing a shroud of secrecy (e.g., *ut elicere omnia arcana specularique abditos eius sensus posset*, "that he might bring into the open what was concealed and look on his hidden feelings," Liv. 40.21.11), or both. We may apply this aspect of Roman specularity to Seneca himself as he innovatively steps into the role of *speculum* at the beginning of the work. As he allows Nero to spy on the empire from the safe and elevated position of the imperial palace, and equally as he allows the people to look within at the *arcana imperii* ("secrets of empire"), he functions as the consummate outsider-insider.

CHAPTER TWELVE

PRIMITIVE POLITICS: LUCAN AND PETRONIUS

Martha Malamud

In Roman literature, politics and morality are not distinct categories: both are implicated in the construction and maintenance of structures of power. Roman virtues are the basis of the *res publica*, the body politic. In what follows, I take “politics” in a broad sense: “public or social ethics, that branch of moral philosophy dealing with the state or social organism as a whole.”¹ As Edwards puts it, “issues which for many in the present day might be ‘political’ or ‘economic’ were moral ones for Roman writers, in that they linked them to the failure of individuals to control themselves.”² What follows is a case study of how Lucan and Petronius deploy a pair of motifs popular in Roman moralizing discourse (primitive hospitality, as exemplified by the simple meal, and primitive architecture) in ways that reflect on the politics of early imperial Rome.

Embedded in the moralizing tradition is the notion of decline. Roman virtue is always situated in the past, and visions of the primitive, such as the rustic meal and the primitive hut, evoke comparisons with a corrupted present. These themes are present in Roman literature from an early period. Already by the third century BCE, there is a growing preoccupation with a decline in ethical standards attributed to luxury and tied to the expansion of Roman power and changes in Rome’s political structure. Anxiety focused around luxurious foods, clothing, art, and architecture. As Purcell observes of Roman views of their own food history, “[d]iet-history is a subdivision of that much larger way of conceptualizing passing time, the history of moral decline and recovery; indeed, it is a way of indexing that history,”³ and one can say the same of architecture-history. From the perspective of Roman moralists and

¹ *OED* s.v. “politic” B3a (pl. “politics”)—a definition considered obsolete. For an introduction into the much discussed question of literature and politics in the age of Nero, see Brisset (1964); Rudich (1993); Sullivan (1985); Bartsch (1994); Bartsch (1998); Henderson (1988) 122–64; Masters (1992); Elsner and Masters (1994).

² Edwards (1993) 4.

³ Purcell (2003) 343.

ethnographers, diet and architecture are markers that reveal individual and civic character, and as such, they have political implications.

Encolpius' arrival in Croton and visit to Oenotrea's *cella* ("hut" or "cubicle," the setting for *Sat.* 134–8), and Amyclas' reception of Julius Caesar in *Bellum Civile* 5.504–59 and a related passage from *Bellum Civile* 9, the sandstorm in the Libyan desert, share certain motifs (shipwreck, fishermen, primitive architecture, hospitality) and models. While Petronius and Lucan each exploit the comic possibilities of an encounter with the primitive, they also use primitive imagery to engage in a long-standing debate about the moral and ethical soundness of the Roman polity.⁴ Allusions to Odysseus' encounters with different groups of men and to epic treatments of primitive hospitality form a sort of anthropological framework for Petronius' portrait of civic life in Croton; motifs of fishing and shipwreck index symptoms of social decline relevant to the Neronian period (legacy-hunting, civil war, childlessness). Writing about the primitive is, in fact, one way of *writing politics* in Rome.

Primitive Rome: Romulean Thatch

"Primitive Rome" had long been an attractive trope for Roman writers: juxtaposition of past and present allowed them to explore Roman history and character. Vergil, master of chronological confusion, uses the primitive buildings of Evander's day to provide a moral framework for evaluating the Augustan present against both the primitive Roman past and the Arcadian past evoked by Evander, whose origins are in Arcadia (*Aen.* 8.359–68). Evander's cramped house (*angusti . . . tecti*, *Aen.* 8.366, in striking contrast to *tectum augustum, ingens*, "the huge royal hall" of Latinus' palace, 7.170) and the couch of leaves draped with a bear hide, are proof of Evander's virtuous simplicity. The "huge" (*ingentem*, *Aen.* 8.367) hero Aeneas, like Hercules before him, is on a scale much

⁴ As Edwards (1996) 28–9 comments, "the juxtaposition of vastly different images of the past and present . . . serves to emphasise Rome's lack of continuity, the tension between past rusticity and present urbanity, and thus to problematise what it means to be a Roman." See Edwards (1996) 28–43 for a discussion of ancient buildings preserved in Rome. Similarly, ritual meals and accounts of the early Roman diet are revealing. Cf. also Purcell (2003) 341: "[f]ood for the Romans . . . plays a notable role, perhaps even a surprising one, in the relationship of the present to various pasts". Gowers (1993) is indispensable on the cultural significance of food in Roman literature.

larger than the tiny hut that receives him. Aeneas' heroic *pietas* is reinforced by association with rustic simplicity and primitive virtue. The comical image of cattle mooing in the Forum and in the fashionable neighborhood of the Carinae, where Augustus himself lived, is, however, open to interpretation. The juxtaposition of past and present can be read as consolidating the Augustan claim to bring the polity back to its original and uncorrupted state. But it is also ambiguous. Do the roving cows call attention to the continuity that links present-day Rome and its virtuous ruler Augustus with Evander's Arcadian settlement and Augustus' ancestor Aeneas? Or do they reveal the distance between the extravagance of contemporary Rome and its virtuous origins?

The contrast between the simple dwellings of early Rome and the splendid buildings of the principate was not just a literary conceit; it was part of the lived experience of Romans. In the same neighborhood as the magnificent complex that included Augustus' residence, a temple to Apollo, and the libraries, was the hut of Romulus, a simple structure made of sticks and reeds.⁵ As Edwards notes, "the hut of Romulus, many times rebuilt, was perhaps as much a fiction as the *mores maiorum*—customs of the ancestors—of which it was the physical symbol. Yet constant renewal of the hut could also function as a demonstration of concern for the preservation of those values with which it was associated."⁶ Vergil's description of the hut of Evander evokes descriptions of the hut of Romulus, located either on the Palatine or the Capitoline. Augustus, as part of his restoration of the *area Capitolina* in 26–20 BCE, had a hut of Romulus constructed on the Capitoline.⁷ Vitruvius draws attention to its significance: *in Capitolio commonefacere potest et significare mores uetustatis Romuli casa et in arce sacrorum stramentis tecta* ("on the Capitoline, the hut of Romulus and on the citadel temples roofed with straw can remind us of and symbolize the customs of antiquity," *De Arch.* 2.1.5). In his description of the depiction of the defense of the Capitol on the shield of Aeneas, Vergil locates the hut of Romulus on the Capitoline (*Aen.* 8.652–54), evoking the hut of Evander (both humble structures are ironically referred to as *regia*), and suggesting

⁵ Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.79.11 describes the Romans' care in restoring and rebuilding the hut of Romulus.

⁶ Edwards (1996) 34.

⁷ Balland (1984) 73–4.

that Evander and Romulus, both founders of Rome, share the same virtuous lifestyle.⁸

Romulus' hut also marks the contrast between the rustic simplicity of primitive Rome and the luxuries of Ovid's day:

Tempore creuit amor, qui nunc est summus, habendi:
 uix ultra quo iam progrediatur habet.
 pluris opes nunc sunt quam prisci temporis annis,
 dum populus pauper, dum noua Roma fuit,
 dum casa Martigenam capiebat parua Quirinum,
 et dabat exiguum fluminis ulua torum.
 Iuppiter *angusta* uix totus stabat in *aede*,
 inque Iouis dextra fictile fulmen erat.
 frondibus ornabant quae nunc Capitolia gemmis,
 pascebatque suas ipse senator oues:
 nec pudor in stipula placidam cepisse quietem
 et fenum capiti subposuisse fuit.
 iura dabat populis posito modo praetor aratro,
 et leuis argenti lammina crimen erat.
 at postquam fortuna loci caput extulit huius
 et tetigit summo uertice Roma deos,
 creuerunt et opes et opum furiosa cupido,
 et, cum possideant plurima, plura petunt.

(Ov. *Fast.* 1.195–212 [my italics])

Love of owning things, which now is at its height, grew with time: it can hardly grow greater. Wealth is worth more now than in times past, when the public was poor, and Rome was new, when a small hut held Quirinus, son of Mars, and sedge from the river provided his little couch. In those days all of Jupiter could scarcely fit in his *own temple*, and he held a clay thunderbolt in his right hand. Leaves adorned the Capitol, which now is decked in gems, and the senator himself took his sheep to graze: no one was ashamed to take a quiet nap in straw, and put his head down on a pillow of hay. The praetor came straight from the plow to hear the people's cases, and a light piece of silver plate was against the law. But after the fortune of this place raised its head and Rome touched the heavens with her lofty head, both wealth and the rabid lust for wealth have grown, and those who have the most seek even more.

Ovid's treatment expands upon the humor latent in Vergil's, where the repeated use of *subeo* suggests that huge Aeneas has to bend his head to enter Evander's house. Ovid exaggerates the difference in scale: his

⁸ Edwards (1996) 36 notes that no ancient text refers to the fact that there were two huts of Romulus; cf. Gransden (1976) 162.

Jupiter can hardly fit into his own temple.⁹ Vergil's cattle mooing in what would become the Carinae and the forum are surpassed by Ovid's senators pasturing their flocks and napping on beds of straw, while the praetor comes running from his plow to the law courts. In the *Fasti* passage, the juxtaposition of ancient and modern Rome unambiguously condemns the vices of the latter: primitive simplicity is overwhelmed by *amor habendi* ("the love of owning things," 1.195) and *opum furiosa cupidō* ("the rabid lust for wealth," 1.211) of Augustan Rome.¹⁰

Primitive Petronius 1: Cyclopes, Shipwreck, and Fishermen

In the chaotic and fragmentary world of the *Satyricon*, primitive diet and architecture are evoked without a trace of nostalgia.¹¹ A cluster of allusions to the *Odyssey*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and the Callimachean characters Hecale and Molorchus shape Petronius' characterization of the inhabitants of Croton, who exhibit vices condemned in Roman moral discourse—sexual license, perverted diet, childlessness, and legacy-hunting. The city is a post-apocalyptic polity destroyed by a cycle of war, whose inhabitants embody not the primitive virtues of an Evander or Romulus, but rather the bestiality of the man-eating Cyclops or the sinister magic of the witch Circe, who transforms humans into brutes. Allusions in the Croton episode to Ovid's account of the cyclical nature of civilizations and Odysseus' encounters with peoples at different stages of cultural development suggest that we read Croton as Petronius' contribution to anthropological speculations on the nature of human culture. Everyman/Noman Encolpius is tossed into Croton's

⁹ The juxtaposition of *Iuppiter angusta...aede* (*Fast.* 1.201) recalls Vergil's play with *angusti tecti* (*Aen.* 8.366; Evander's hut) and *tectum augustum* (7.170; Latinus' palace).

¹⁰ See Hinds (1992) 81–153 on Ovid's attitude towards Augustan Rome in the *Fasti*. Despite Ovid's explicit endorsement of Augustus over Romulus, the consistent undercutting of Romulus subverts Augustus' own systematic identification of himself (as restorer of Rome) with Romulus (Rome's founder). The phrase *amor habendi* is also used in Ovid's description of the Iron Age (the most degenerate of the ages of man) at *Met.* 1.128.

¹¹ The scholarly consensus is that the Petronius who wrote the *Satyricon* is the same as the Petronius so vividly described at Tac. *Ann.* 16. Rose (1971) thoroughly reviews the evidence and argues for identification with the Tacitean Petronius; Smith (1975) xii–xiv, 213–9 is less certain; Connors (1994) 225–36 convincingly expands Rose's argument that part of the *Satyricon* was composed after the death of Lucan.

crucible of civilization, a melting pot in which aspects of the primitive past and probable future bubble and seethe.¹²

As Encolpius and his friends approach Croton, they follow in the footsteps of Odysseus and Aeneas. Victoria Rimell has recently pointed out that the voyage aboard Lichas' ship and the subsequent shipwreck rework the narrative of Odysseus' escape from the Cyclops' cave. Eumolpus, in fact, explicitly makes the comparison: *fingite nos antrum Cyclopi intrasse. Quaerendum est aliquod fugium* ("pretend we've just entered the Cyclops' cave. Now we have to find some way out," *Sat.* 101.7). But, as Rimell observes:

Encolpius and his gang never get out of the dark, enclosed spaces in which they are perpetually trapped, but simply move from one metaphorical cave to another—from the rhetorical school and dark marketplace, to Quartilla's musty brothel, Trimalchio's house, the ship, and eventually Croton.¹³

The Cyclops' cave in the *Odyssey*, which Rimell sees as the prototype for the metaphorical caves of the *Satyricon*, is the architectural epitome of a hypo-civilized way of life approaching, but not achieving, civilization.¹⁴ The cave—a natural space adapted to human use—exhibits on the one hand civilized order and abundance (orderly sheep-pens, well-wrought milk pails and bowls, baskets of cheese), on the other, primitive disorder (the monstrous boulder that seals in Odysseus and his men; the floor soaked with brains and human blood).

Diet, too, marks the Cyclopes as "not quite" civilized. They have fire, but they do not cook. They do not plow, sow, make bread, or cook meat, but rather consume milk, cheese, and raw human flesh. Although the Cyclopes live near one another and exhibit some concern for each other, they do not function as a society. They live in isolation, not mingling with one another (*Hom. Od.* 10.189); when the other Cyclopes try to help Polyphemus get revenge against his enemies, Odysseus' ruse is enough to thwart them in achieving even the most primitive of definitions of

¹² At *Ov. Met.* 15.418–49 Pythagoras recounts to Numa the future greatness of Rome, but prefaces that prediction with a long list of great cities now fallen into ruin.

¹³ Rimell (2002) 105 notes that Petronius explicitly recalls the Cyclops' cave three times: at *Sat.* 97.4 when Encolpius tries to hide Giton by tying him underneath his bed like Ulysses under the ram; at *Sat.* 101.5 when Eumolpus compares Lichas to the Cyclops; and at *Sat.* 101.7 (quoted above).

¹⁴ Hernández (2000) 346 describes it as "a world which resembles the Golden Age, in which the earth yields its fruits continuously and without toil, yet the Cyclopes themselves seem wholly uncivilized." See also Pucci (1993) 26–46.

justice (helping one's friends and harming one's enemies). Allusions to the Cyclopes suggest a savage, pre-political way of life and prefigure the state of affairs Encolpius will encounter in Croton.

The behavior of the passengers exceeds that of the Cyclopes: they *are* able to organize themselves to fight for revenge (*Sat.* 109.1). Tryphaena quells the nascent "civil war" that erupts among the passengers on the ship by spouting poetry modeled on a passage early in the first book of Lucan's *De Bello Ciuili*.¹⁵ This causes a cessation of hostilities, but Petronius' language suggests that the halt is only temporary: *haesit paulisper acies* ("the battle stopped for a short time," *Sat.* 109.1). Mirroring the sudden truce, a sudden calm interrupts the voyage and the sailors seize the opportunity to do a little bit of fishing (*Sat.* 108.7). But this turns out to be, literally, the calm before the storm, paralleling events in *Odyssey* 12, when Odysseus' ship is detained by unfavorable winds for a month.¹⁶ Their supplies exhausted, Odysseus' men turn to fishing and trapping birds; finally, they slaughter the cattle of Helios, despite divine warnings not to do so. This sacrilegious act, a perverted form of feasting, spurs Zeus to destroy Odysseus' ship and all of his remaining companions. Odysseus barely escapes from the wreck with his life, washing up on the shore of Calypso's island, where he will be stranded for seven years.

After the brief interlude of calm, a tremendous storm wrecks Lichas' ship. As Rimell has shown, Petronius uses the shipwreck to develop the theme of civil war, primarily through the figure of the dodgy rhetorician Eumolpus.¹⁷ As the ship falls apart under the battering of the spectacular storm, Encolpius and company hear a strange noise issuing from the captain's cabin, which turns out to be Eumolpus in the throes of inspiration (*Sat.* 115.1–4). The poem that preoccupies Eumolpus as the ship breaks up around him turns out to be Petronius' own version of *De Bello Ciuili*, an epic that Eumolpus later recites during the journey to Croton (*Sat.* 119–24). Connors explains the connections between the shipwreck and the subject matter of the poem:

¹⁵ *Quis furor, exclamat, pacem conuertit in arma?* ("What madness is turning peace into war?" she cries," *Sat.* 108.14) echoes Lucan's *quis furor, o ciues, quae tanta licentia ferri?* ("Citizens, what madness is this? What unlicensed freedom of the sword?", *Luc.* 1.8) Cf. Rimell (2002) 182.

¹⁶ In an earlier ominous scene, the monster Scylla as she plucks Odysseus' men from their ship is compared to a fisherman catching little fish with a pole (*Hom. Od.* 12.251–5).

¹⁷ Rimell (2002) 98–112.

Because the ship of poetry was in antiquity a common metaphor for literary creation, when the novelist sets the scene of Eumolpus' struggle with poetry on a storm-tossed ship, the explicit and literal wreck of Lichas' ship is matched by the implicit and metaphorical shipwreck of Eumolpus' poem. And when Eumolpus announces shortly afterward that his Civil War poem has not yet received the final touches (*ultimam manum*, *Sat.* 118.6), the shipwreck becomes an elaborately detailed account of the... unfinished and endless ending of Eumolpus' poem...¹⁸

Ship of poetry, ship of state, and the ship that carries the motley crew go down together in the metaphorical shipwreck that is Eumolpus' poem. The fabric of the ship disintegrates, stripped of rudder, oars, mast, and ropes. Encolpius and his friends are rescued by fishermen intent on scavenging from the wreck. Shipwrecks, we may note, had a more than metaphorical meaning to the emperor Nero, who tried to murder his mother by rigging a collapsible boat; she kept her head and managed to stay afloat until she was rescued by some small boats, and had to be gotten rid of later by other means.¹⁹ The incident was notorious; Suetonius mentions that the actor Datus accompanied a song, ὑγίαίνε πάτερ, ὑγίαίνε μήτηρ ("Farewell to you father, farewell to you, mother"), with a pantomime of drinking and swimming, referring to the murders of Claudius and Agrippina (Suet. *Ner.* 39).²⁰ Later Nero himself was tormented by visions of shipwreck: he dreamed he was steering a ship and the helm was wrenched from his hands, reports Suetonius (*Ner.* 46), in his list of omens presaging Nero's disastrous end.

Fishermen and fishing punctuate the voyage to Croton. The crew who fished so happily from the ship during the unexpected calm are potential prey for other fishermen, who seem to desist from scavenging only because they find enough of a crew still on board to defend the cargo. Like the bear meat served up at Trimalchio's feast that sets Habinnas to meditating on the interchangeability of predator and prey, the motif of fishing reminds us that humans who consume can themselves be consumed, a fitting symbolic introduction to the chain of events in Croton that culminates in Eumolpus' scheme to have the inhabitants of

¹⁸ Connors (1994) 230.

¹⁹ Tac. *Ann.* 14.3–5. Cass. Dio 62.12 says Nero and Seneca were inspired to do this by the sight of a collapsible boat at a performance. See Bartsch (1994) 40–2 for a discussion of modern scholars' tendency to see Nero's actions as inspired by the stage.

²⁰ Suetonius cites this as an example of Nero's remarkable tolerance of lampoons directed against him (Datus was exiled, a relatively mild fate).

Croton devour his dead body.²¹ In keeping with Eumolpus' scheme and the Crotonian obsession with legacy hunting, the figure of the fisherman also evokes the image of the con artist hooking his unsuspecting prey with enticing bait. Horace's tricky Teiresias, for example, advises Odysseus to restore his lost fortune by becoming a legacy hunter:

dixi equidem et dico: captes astutus ubique
testamenta senum neu, si uafēr unus et alter
insidiatorem praeroso fugerit hamo,
aut spem deponas aut artem inlusas omittas.

(Hor. *Sat.* 2.5.23–6)

I've said it before and I say it again: be cunning and go after the wills of old men, and if one or two of them is clever enough to nibble the bait from the hook and escape, don't lose heart or give up the craft just because you've been tricked.

The same image occurs earlier in the *Satyricon*, when the rhetorician Agamemnon compares teachers of rhetoric, characterized as tempting their students with *mellitos uerborum globulos* ("sticky gobs of speech," 1.1), to fishermen hooking their prey with tempting bait:

...sic eloquentiae magister, nisi tamquam piscator eam imposuerit hamis
escam, quam scierit appetituros esse pisciculos, sine spe praedae moratur
in scopulo.

(Petr. *Sat.* 3.4)

...the professor of rhetoric is like a fisherman who, unless he baits his hooks with something he knows the little fish will like, will waste his time on his rock without any hope of a catch.²²

After the wreck and the burial of Lichas, Encolpius and his friends explore their surroundings, and learn from a local that they are on the outskirts of the city of Croton, once the first city in Italy (*Sat.* 116). Croton's glory days were in the distant past. In the sixth century BCE it suffered a stinging defeat by the much smaller city of Locris, and reportedly reacted to this humiliation by adopting a life of wanton decadence and luxury, for which it was as notorious as its rival Sybaris, until Pythagoras arrived and inspired its citizens to adopt a frugal and virtuous lifestyle.²³ It is worth noting that both Iamblichus and Porphyry

²¹ *Et si, inquam, ursus homuncionem comest, quanto magis homuncio debet ursum comesse?* ("and so I say, if a bear can eat a guy, surely a guy has the right to eat a bear?", *Sat.* 66.6).

²² Rimell (2002) 26, 50, 87, 132, 169.

²³ *Laudabat cotidie uirtutem et uitia luxuriae casumque ciuitatium ea peste perditarum enumerabat tantumque studium ad frugalitatem multitudinis prouocauit ut aliquos ex his luxuriatos ad optimam*

recount a miracle (or public relations stunt?) performed by Pythagoras as he entered the city of Croton: encountering some fishermen, he claimed to know the exact number of fish they had caught that day. When the catch was counted, Pythagoras was proven to be right, and followed up by convincing the fishermen to return their catch to the sea and compensating them for it. News of this miracle ensured that he was known all over Croton by the time of his arrival.²⁴

Under a Pythagorean regime, Croton was the most powerful city in Southern Italy until the mid-fifth century BCE, when the Pythagorean experiment came to an end, overthrown by a democratic revolution. Croton appears in the last book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as the place where the law-giver Numa goes to learn wisdom, and is the setting for a lengthy harangue by Pythagoras on the mutability of the universe (including the inevitable decline of great cities) and the virtues of vegetarianism.²⁵ Petronius' Croton is a city at the end of its historical cycle: once a place of sloth and decadence, then a city known for the virtues of its citizens and strong in war, it is now a vestige of its former self, populated by people without eloquence, virtue, or learning. It is the ultimate consumer society, where it's every man for himself and the population divides into scavengers and prey:

In hac enim urbe non litterarum studia celebrantur, non eloquentia locum habet, non frugalitas sanctique mores laudibus ad fructum perueniunt, sed quoscumque homines in hac urbe uideritis, scitote in duas partes esse diuisos. Nam aut captantur aut captant. in hac urbe nemo liberos tollit, quia quisquis suos heredes habet, non ad cenas, non ad spectacula admit-

frugem conuersos fuisse incredibile uideretur. Matronarum quoque separatam a uiris doctrinam et puerorum a parentibus frequenter habuit. Docebat nunc has pudicitiam et obsequia in uiros, nunc illos modestiam et litterarum studium ("He used to praise virtue every day, and enumerate the vices associated with luxury and the fate of states poisoned by it, and he stirred up in the crowd such enthusiasm for the simple life that it seemed incredible that any of those who had been converted to a regime of extreme simplicity had ever been lovers of luxury. He frequently gave advice for wives apart from their husbands, and for children apart from their parents. He would teach the former modesty and obedience to their husbands, and the latter restraint and devotion to their studies," Just. *Epit.* 20.4).

²⁴ The con artist Eumolpus as he approaches Croton with his scam to defraud its citizens appears to be a cast as a perverted Pythagoras, but the text is too fragmentary to be sure.

²⁵ Cf. Rimell (2002) 84: "At one time the 'first town' of Italy, this city in the hills is not simply a nightmare inversion of a civilized Carthage in *Aeneid* I, a satiric, modern take on fallen Troy or a caricature of Nero's immoral Rome. Crucially, it is also the opening stage for the last book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. . . . Croton is the first Greek city in Italian territory, and it is where the intellectual king Numa goes to learn about the nature of the universe."

titur, sed omnibus prohibetur commodis, inter ignominiosos habet. Qui uero nec uxores umquam duxerunt nec proximas necessitudines habent, ad summos honores perueniunt, id est soli militares, soli fortissimi atque etiam innocentes habentur. “adibitis,” inquit, “oppidum tamquam in pestilentia campos, in quibus nihil aliud est nisi cadauera quae lacerantur aut corui qui lacerant.”

(Petr. *Sat.* 116.6–9)

Now in this city, literary culture gets no respect, eloquence has no place, frugality and moral values get no reward or praise—no, any men you see in this town fall into one of two camps: either fortune-hunters or their prey. No one raises children in this city, because whoever has his own heirs will never be invited to dinner or asked to the games. They are deprived of every advantage and are considered to be of the lowest class. But those who never take a wife and have no near relations attain the highest honors; they are, in popular opinion, the only ones who are fit for command, brave, respectable! “Yes, indeed,” he said, “you’re coming to a city that’s like a plague-stricken land where there’s nothing but corpses being ravaged and crows ravaging them.”

This bleak appraisal recalls the aftermath of the battle of Pharsalia (Luc. 7.825–46), where flocks of camp-following carrion birds gorge themselves, so gluttoned with slaughter that they drop human limbs from their exhausted claws, and drops of blood and rotting flesh fall from the sky to stain the standards of Caesar’s soldiers.²⁶ The citizens of Croton are so driven by greed that they view children as a liability, and there are social disincentives to reproduction. The one Crotonian we know to have children, ominously named Philomela, uses them as sexual bait to trap Eumolpus.²⁷

Primitive Petronius 2: Oenothea’s Dinner

Inside the city of Croton we find a domestic interior that clearly draws on the tradition of the primitive hut: the squalid *cella* (“cubicle,” “room”) of the priestess of Priapus, Oenothea, to which Encolpius is

²⁶ Cited by Rimell (2002) 86 n. 22.

²⁷ The Ovidian Philomela is another character associated with a primitive hut (she was raped in a hut in the woods). She recovers from rape and mutilation to extract a terrible vengeance on Tereus, her attacker, to whom she serves up his children for dinner. See Rimell (2002) 171–5. Dislike of children is a characteristic associated with other forms of decadence in the Roman moralizing tradition: Seneca the Elder’s Papirius Fabianus (*Controv.* 2.1.13), for example, specifically associates it with luxurious building. For examples of childlessness and legacy-hunting under Nero, see Tac. *Ann.* 13.52, 15.19.

led after he prays for relief of his impotence at the shrine of Priapus.²⁸ Oenothea is a literary composite, drawn in part from the figure of Circe in *Odyssey* 10, in part from Ovid's *Amores* (1.8.5–20), which places her in the tradition of the *lena*, or procuress, whose expertise includes *Aeaea carmina* ("Circaean songs") and other magical arts.²⁹ The description of Oenothea's den and the meal she and Encolpius share is modeled as well on parodies of epic hospitality scenes.³⁰ In particular, Petronius alludes to Callimachus' *Hecale*, the "Victoria Berenices" fragment of the *Aetia*, which recounts the visit of Heracles to the farmer Molorchus, and most significantly, Philemon and Baucis, the story that lies at the center of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (8.611–724).³¹

Philemon and Baucis serve up a simple meal in their rustic hut to Jupiter and Mercury (traveling incognito); both the meal and the hut, says Gowers:

...suggest a persistent preoccupation in Roman culture: that is, the sporadic points of contact between a civilized Roman and the primeval remains of his or her society's origins—commemorated in the archaizing festivals of the Roman year, with their temporary return to simple food and makeshift huts.³²

The meal served by the Phrygian couple conforms to the stereotype of the Roman simple meal, and consists of a main dish of boiled cabbage and bacon, preceded by a spread of olives, preserved cornel cherries, endive, radish, cheese, and eggs. Dessert is nuts, fruit, and honey. As Gowers notes, this is simple, but not as primitive as the pre-agricultural fare of Celeus at *Fasti* 4.510 (acorns and berries). Unlike the menu in a similar rustic hospitality scene in Silius Italicus' *Punica* (7.166–211),

²⁸ The Croton episode may, as Rimell (2002) 148 puts it, "be read as a confused recollection or regurgitation of *Odyssey* X." Encolpius, in the role of *polyaenus* ("much-praised") Odysseus, encounters the seductive Circe, but fails to achieve the erotic success of his predecessor and ends up unmanned. Odysseus, protected by the drug provided by Hermes, is able to force the goddess Circe not to leave him ἀνήνωρ ("unmanned," *Od.* 10.301, 341). See Connors (1998) 42.

²⁹ Cf. Connors (1998) 43: "In Oenothea's claim to magical power, it becomes clear that 'Circean' magical powers have been displaced onto her: here again Petronius scatters fragments of Homer across his kaleidoscopic fiction."

³⁰ Rosenmeyer (1991) 404 provides a list of scenes of hospitality offered to a god by a mortal.

³¹ Feeney (1991) 229–32 discusses the central importance of the debate between Lelex and Pirithous on the power of the gods to transform bodies that introduces the Philemon and Baucis episode.

³² Gowers (2005) 333–4.

this is not a vegetarian meal; it contains meat in the form of bacon, but other aspects suggest that it seems to come from a pre-cereal and pre-sacrificial era (there is no bread mentioned, and the gods forbid the slaughter of the couple's goose). Despite its simplicity, the meal requires careful preparation, "a kind of civilizing process."³³

Dinner at Oenothea's is a sleazy send-up of this and other primitive hospitality scenes. Encolpius, breaking into hexameters, praises her *paupertatis ingenium*, explicitly comparing her to Hecale—*qualis in Actaea quondam fuit hospita terra / digna sacris Hecale* ("just as once in the land of Attica lived a hospitable woman Hecale, worthy of sacred honors," *Sat.* 135.15)—and alluding in various details to Ovid's description of the hut of Philemon and Baucis.³⁴ With its wattle-and-daub construction, earthenware cups, willow couch, baskets woven of reed and smoky rafters, Oenothea's hovel fits unmistakably in the tradition of the primitive dwelling, but her behavior, and the meal she serves her guest, make a mockery of the tradition linking primitive architecture and diet with old-fashioned virtue. Baucis and Hecale light fires for their guests and Baucis provides water for them to wash; Oenothea lights a fire, but accidentally extinguishes it when the stool she is standing on collapses and knocks over her kettle. Baucis' carefully preserved bacon is transmuted by Petronius into a rotten pig's head softened by a thousand blows (*sincipitis uetustissima particula mille plagis dolata*, *Sat.* 135.4), and the wholesome variety of vegetables offered to Mercury and Jupiter dwindle here to a handful of beans disgustingly prepared: *at illa inertiam meam accusans ipsa fabas tollit, dentibusque folliculos pariter spoliatur atque in terram ueluti muscarum imagines despuat* ("but she, scolding my sluggishness, takes the beans herself, strips the shells off with her teeth, and spits them on the ground like flies," *Sat.* 135.6).³⁵

The beans, however, are not consumed by Encolpius. A flock of geese sacred to Priapus burst into the room, attack Encolpius, and eat the beans that have just been shelled. He responds by beating one of the geese to death with the leg from a rickety table, then celebrates

³³ Gowers (2005) 339.

³⁴ See Garrido (1930) 10–1; Sullivan (1985) 86–7; Connors (1998) 43–7; Rosenmeyer (1991) 403–13; Rimell (2002) 160–2 on the relationship between the Oenothea passage, the *Hecale*, and Ovid's Philemon and Baucis.

³⁵ Oenothea's method for preparing the beans is likely derived from a model passage in *Ov. Fast.* 2.571–83, where a drunken old woman performs a magic rite against evil speech in honor of the goddess Tacita; the ritual actions include spitting out seven beans. See Perutelli (1986) 140–1.

his victory over the goose with another hexameter outburst, comparing himself to the victorious Hercules defeating other avian foes, the Stympthalian birds and the Harpies.³⁶ The death of the goose horrifies Oenothea, who calls the deed *magnum flagitium* (“a great crime,” *Sat.* 137) and accuses Encolpius of polluting her house with blood. Her horror is quickly calmed by Encolpius’ offer to pay for the goose, and she sits down to read his fortune, first by floating hazelnuts in wine, then by extracting the liver of the dead goose. The two then cook and eat the goose, in a happy reversal for Encolpius, who gets *foie gras* fit for a Roman gourmand instead of the rotten pig’s head and fly-like beans that looked to be his fare.³⁷

Throughout this episode, food carries sinister overtones that pervert the model of pious *xenia*. As Rimell points out,³⁸ the huge cooking pot and the pig’s head beaten by a thousand blows have gruesome implications, given the systematic allusions to the Cyclops’ cave in the narrative of the arrival at Croton and to Circe, who transforms her guests into swine, in the narrative leading up to the Oenothea episode. Even the beans are questionable fare. Oenothea’s meal of beans and pig-jowl is a send-up of Horace’s ideal simple meal in *Satire* 2.6 (another text that sets simple meal and simple dwelling against elaborate feast and luxurious dwelling in the fable of the City Mouse and Country Mouse).³⁹ It opens with the poet longing for his country farm and a rustic supper: *o quando faba Pythagorae cognata simulque / uncta satis pingui ponentur holuscula lardo?* (“Oh, when will I be served beans, those cousins of Pythagoras, and greens well-larded with fat bacon?”, *Sat.* 2.6.5–6). Petronius’ treatment exploits Horace’s joking reference to Pythagorean beans, transforming the satirist’s simple and wholesome meal into the antithesis of the vegetarian, bean-banning diet so vociferously promoted by Ovid’s Pythagoras. For, while beans feature frequently in Roman accounts of simple meals, they were taboo to Pythagoreans; among the

³⁶ As Rosenmeyer (1991) 411 shows, this incident combines motifs from Philemon and Baucis with reminiscences of Molochus’ “epic” battle against mice, which occurs as he entertains the hero Heracles.

³⁷ Hor. *Sat.* 2.1.88 mentions the liver of a goose fed on figs as part of a dish served at Nasidienus’ feast (a scene with cannibalistic overtones; see Gowers (1993) 176). Plin. *HN* 8.209 remarks on the wisdom of Italian farmers, who first force-feed the bird while alive and then soak the liver in milk sweetened with honey.

³⁸ Rimell (2002) 160–1.

³⁹ Horace’s *Satires* were clearly an important influence for Petronius: see Bodel (1999) 39 on Petronius’ adaptation of *Sat.* 2.8 in the *cena Trimalchionis*; also Rimell (2002) 171–2.

many explanations proposed for Pythagoras' ban was that eating beans was like eating the heads of one's parents. Numerous sources suggest that beans are somehow connected with human life and generation: for example, it was thought that a bean or bean blossom buried in a container would eventually be transformed into a human head.⁴⁰ In the Pythagorean setting of Croton, Oenothea's meal is doubly inappropriate, foreshadowing the meal of human flesh Eumolpus is plotting to trick the greedy Crotonians into consuming.

What Encolpius actually eats, roast goose, is in and of itself a fine dish, but the Odyssean structure that informs the *Satyricon* suggests that Encolpius' slaying of the animal sacred to the god Priapus is analogous to Odysseus' men's killing of the cattle sacred to Helios; the specific parallels to other *xenia* episodes also suggest that the slaying of the goose is a perversion of the stock rustic hospitality scene (the simple meal Hecale serves Theseus is vegetarian in the *Supplementum Hellenisticum*;⁴¹ the gods in the Philemon and Baucis episode spare the panicked bird; Molorchus serves his guest Heracles a vegetarian meal and, according to Probus' summary, the god asks Molorchus not to slaughter his only ram). Encolpius' comparison of the attacking geese to the Harpies also evokes a scene of perverted eating: the Harpies' specialty is polluting banquets.⁴² Furthermore, the remedies Oenothea employs to treat Encolpius' impotence look very much like preparations for cooking an elaborate dish: his fingers are rinsed in celery, leeks and wine, and he is ceremonially stuffed with a leather dildo and basted with the juices of watercress and absinthe (*abrotonum*).⁴³ Well-stuffed Encolpius looks headed for the oven, just like the goose, but he manages to escape, bleeding

⁴⁰ Eating one's parents: Heraclid. Pont. in Lydus, *Mens.* 4.42; Ath. 2.65; Plut. *Symp.* 2.3.635E. Human head: Heraclid. Pont. frag. 41; Lucian *Vit. Auct.* 6. See Dye (1991), who cites Delatte (1930) 33–57 for a comprehensive list of sources on Pythagorean beliefs about beans. The ban may be a warning against participating in democratic politics, as beans were used as counters in the allotment of public offices by sortition: Guthrie (1962) 185; Hermann (2004) 60–1.

⁴¹ Lloyd-Jones and Parsons (1983) frags. 264, 266. Rosenmeyer (1991) 409 n. 29 suggests that Probus' statement is either an "error of contamination or 'reading backwards' from later sources," a point she develops in detail in Rosenmeyer (1993) 206–14.

⁴² Cf. *Diripiuntque dapes contactuque omnia foedunt / immundo; tum uox taetrum dira inter odorem* ("they rip apart the feast and foul everything with their filthy touch; then horrible shrieking amidst the foul stench," *Aen.* 3.227–8) and *polluit ore dapes* ("she polluted the feast with her mouth," *Aen.* 3.234).

⁴³ See Rimell (2002) 163 for further discussion of the culinary implications of this passage. Plin. *HN* 21.92 mentions *abrotonum*, a plant with the medicinal qualities of wormwood, as a cure for impotence.

and barefoot. The abrupt ending to the meal recalls the sudden end of Trimalchio's feast, which breaks up when the trumpets at Trimalchio's *faux* funeral summon the fire brigade in a scene that recalls the falling curtain and fleeing guests of Horace's *Satire* 2.8.⁴⁴ The episode oscillates between extremes of excessive consumption and thwarted eating. The rich *foie gras* provided by the unfortunate goose, the elaborate stuffing and basting of Encolpius himself, and evocations of Trimalchio's feast draw on a paradigm of excessive eating. On the other hand, Encolpius never eats the beans and pig-jowl (though the geese eat the beans) and he, the apparent main course, runs away, leaving the crones both unfed and sexually unsatisfied, much as Nasidienus' meal ends with the guests running away without having tasted anything (*ut nihil omnino gustaremus*, "we ate nothing at all," Horace *Sat.* 2.8.94), another variant of the parallel literary trope of the unsatisfied guest.

Encolpius' hexameter verses, which explicitly recall his Ovidian and Callimachean models, evoke the traditional model of primitive simplicity aligned with the positive moral values of thrift and hospitality, implicitly urging the reader to compare the debased world of today with the past represented by the figures of Hecale and Philemon and Baucis—as Gowers notes,⁴⁵ old age is an important feature of the Philemon and Baucis story, where an ancient narrator tells the tale of the old couple; as in the *Fasti*, where there are many elderly narrators, old people are a link to *vetustas* ("old age"). But the prose framework allows for no such creeping nostalgia. Petronius portrays Croton as a society ruined by endless civil war, fast-forwarded into a post-political state that uncannily recalls the pre-civilized states encountered by Odysseus on his journeys (the cannibalistic Laestrygonians, the isolated, man-eating Cyclopes, the animal kingdom ruled by Circe). The family (the basic social unit of the state) has completely broken down in Croton, whose citizens reject marriage and child-bearing in favor of legacy-hunting and adoption. In this they are even worse than the Cyclopes, who lack social structures such as councils, laws, and developed architecture, but do live in family units, each male governing his wife and children

⁴⁴ Branham and Kinney (1993) 73 n. *ad* 78.2 suggest that the arrival of the fire brigade and the escape of Encolpius recalls the theme of Conflagration Survived (the Civil War, Troy Burning, Rome's burning under Nero). Encolpius' escape from Oenoe's oven would fit this pattern. On the finale of Horace *Sat.* 2.8, see Gowers (1993) 178–9; on its similarities to the conclusion of Trimalchio's feast, see Bodel (1999) 39; Courtney (2001) 103; Sullivan (1968) 125; Rimell (2002) 172–3.

⁴⁵ Gowers (2005) 344.

(Hom. *Od.* 9.112–5). Oenothea's squalid hovel, her filthy meal with its cannibalistic overtones, evoke this other side of the primitive, an anthropology that looks back in horror at the savage roots of human society. Cannibalism, the characteristic feature of Petronius' Croton, was in some ancient accounts the diet that characterized pre-civilized man: in Ennius' account, for example, Jupiter initiated civilization by banning cannibalism (*Euhemerus* frag. 9).⁴⁶ Ovid structures his *Metamorphoses* around an anthropology based on diet, beginning with the cannibalistic feast of Lycaon (*Met.* 163–243), the prototypical tyrant. He places the idealized simple meal of Philemon and Baucis, with its wholesome vegetables and typically Roman pork, in the center of the poem, and concludes with the vegetarian rantings of Pythagoras, who warns against consumption of any animal because human souls are reincarnated into animal bodies.⁴⁷ Where Ovid creates a chronology of civilization marked by diet (pre-civilized cannibalism, the wholesome, pre-sacrificial meal of Philemon and Baucis, and—perhaps ironically—the vegetarian ideal espoused by Pythagoras), Croton in general and Oenothea's kitchen in particular represent a civilization in collapse, reverting to a state of primitive squalor and perverting the dietary norms that differentiate civilized (Ro)man from his savage predecessors.

Primitive Lucan 1: Pauper Amyclas

Petronius' evocations of the primitive, whether architectural, like Oenothea's hovel, or dietary, make a mockery of traditions that situate moral virtue in the distant past. His Oenothea retrospectively stains the scenes of primitive hospitality that inspired her; the Crotonians, who represent a civilization past its peak, are indistinguishable from the savagery of the pre-civilized Cyclopes and Laestrygonians, suggesting that contemporary Rome paradoxically combines the vices of the primitive societies with the decadence of the hyper- or post-civilized. Lucan too deploys motifs of the primitive, perhaps less cynically than

⁴⁶ Cited by Evans (2003) 16.

⁴⁷ But coming, as this episode does, after fourteen books of metamorphoses in which people are changed into all sorts of things animal, vegetable, and mineral, Pythagoras' dietary strictures seem woefully inadequate; as Rimell (2002) 107 points out, "[c]annibalism was the fuel for paranoia in Ovid's Croton and throughout the *Metamorphoses*, in which a world in perpetual flux could contain human souls in plants, liquids, even gases, as well as in animals we might ordinarily eat."

Petronius: the corruption of imperial Rome is contrasted with scenes of primitive virtue set either in the distant past or on the edges of the civilized world. Indeed, at 1.158–72, Lucan contrasts early Roman virtue with the corruption of the present day, including architecture and diet in his index of moral decline. The encounter between Amyclas and Caesar at the mid-point of the poem (like Ovid's tale of Philemon and Baucis) is part of a complex of images that culminates in descriptions of the primitive habits of the Libyans in *Bellum Civile* 9, and stands in pointed contrast to the corrupt luxury of empire (the latter perhaps best epitomized in the excesses of Cleopatra's banquet and palace elaborately detailed at the opening of book 10).

At 5.504–677, Lucan expands upon an event that is attested by several authors (though not by Caesar himself): Caesar's audacious attempt to cross the stormy Adriatic in a small boat (Val. Max. 9.8.2, who adduces it as an illustration of *temeritas*, "recklessness"; Plut. *Caes.* 38, Suet. *Iul.* 58).⁴⁸ Several of the details Lucan presents are similar to a story Appian relates about Marius who, fleeing from Rome after Sullan forces took over the city, made his way out of to the sea by deserted roads and took refuge in a marsh. He found a hut, where he covered himself with leaves and rested for a time; he then found the boat of an old fisherman, whom he overpowered, and sailed alone in the midst of a storm until he landed on an island, met up with a friendly ship, and was taken to Africa. (App. *B Civ.* 1.7.62) The isolated hut, the couch of leaves, Marius' hyper-aggressive behavior towards the fisherman, and his overwhelming trust in fortune suggest that Lucan used Marius as his model for Caesar (who himself liked to evoke the figure of Marius).⁴⁹ In addition to this historical model, Lucan combines various poetic models, including a cluster of episodes of humble hospitality (Callimachus' *Hecale*, Ovid's tale of Philemon and Baucis [*Met.* 8.611–724], Aeneas' visit to Evander's "palace" [*Aen.* 8.366–7], and the lists of bad weather signs from *Georgics* 1.351–514 and probably Aratus as well).⁵⁰ He also

⁴⁸ Morford (1967) 37 suggests the anecdote probably appeared in Livy.

⁴⁹ The incident was apparently widely known; Cic. *Red. Pop.* 20 alludes to it. Marius evidently remained a popular figure in the late republic. Caesar deliberately aligned himself with Marius in his propaganda, displaying his *imago* at his aunt's funeral in 69 and restoring his trophy on the Capitol during his aedileship in 65: Morstein-Marx (2004) 110–1.

⁵⁰ Other Vergilian models are present as well, especially the disastrous night raid of Nisus and Euryalus: Narducci (1983) 183–94; Thompson and Bruère (1968) 1–21.

anticipates his own description of the primitive inhabitants of Libya: Libya, I will argue, is thematically central to this passage.

The episode, which occurs at the mid-point of the poem, begins with Caesar, unable to sleep, planning an audacious deed: to cross the stormy sea to Italy and bring Antony and the rest of his army back with him (Luc. 5.504–10).⁵¹ Leaping over the bodies of the sleeping sentries, Caesar follows the shoreline until he finds a boat and the boat's owner, who lives in a peculiar hut:⁵²

...litora curua *legit*, primisque inuenit in undis
rupibus exesis haerentem fune carinam.
rectorem dominumque ratis secunda tenebat
haud procul inde *domus*, non ullo robore fulta,
sed sterili iunco *cannaque intexta palustri*,
et latus inuersa nudum munita phaselo.
haec Caesar bis terque manu quassantia tectum
limina commouit. Molli consurgit Amyclas,
quem dabat *alga*, toro. Quisnam mea naufragus, inquit,
tecti petit? aut quem nostrae Fortuna coegit
auxilium sperare casae? Sic fatus, ab alto
aggere iam tepidae sublato fune fauillae,
scintillam tenuem commotos paut in ignes;
securus belli: praedam ciuilibus armis
scit non esse *casas*.

(Luc. 5.513–27 [my italics])

...*he followed* the curving shore, and found at the edge of the waves a vessel tied up to the hollow rocks with a rope. Not far away a shelter provided

⁵¹ As Narducci (1983) 183–94 points out, Caesar here exhibits behavior associated with anxiety and inconstancy. His *sollicitus gressus* (“nervous gait”) and his sleeplessness are both traits shared with Sallust’s Catiline: *namque animus impurus, dis hominibusque infestus neque uigiliis neque quietibus sedari poterat: ita conscientia mentem excitam uastabat. Igitur color ei exsanguis, foedi oculi, citus modo, modo tardus incessus: prorsus in facie uultuque uecordia inerat* (“For his guilty mind, at peace with neither gods nor men, found no comfort either waking or sleeping; so effectually did conscience desolate his tortured spirit. His complexion, in consequence, was pale, his eyes haggard, his walk sometimes quick and sometimes slow, and distraction was plainly apparent in every feature and look,” Sall. *Cat.* 15 [emphasis mine]).

⁵² The verb Lucan uses to describe Caesar’s search along the coast is *legit* (5.513), here meaning to trace or follow. A parallel use occurs at 9.950–6, where again the subject of the verb is Caesar. Here different meanings of *legere* overlap: Caesar is dogging Pompey’s footsteps, tracking him (*legens*) as he flees; he coasts (*legit*) along the Thracian shore and the Hellespont. But the use of *legere* calls attention to the act of reading as well; without any knowledge of literature, the Hellespont and Hero’s tower would be meaningless landmarks. Similarly, the use of *legit* in the Amyclas episode sets the tone for a passage that needs careful reading and interpretation and suggests that we should be alert to intertextual allusions.

a *home* for the captain who owned the boat. It was not supported by any wood, but *woven together* with barren rushes and *marsh reeds*, and its exposed side was protected by an inverted skiff. Caesar beat the door repeatedly with his fist, shaking the whole house. Amyclas, jumping up from his soft couch of seaweed, says, "What shipwrecked sailor seeks my house? Whom has Fortune driven to hope for help from my hut?" He finished speaking, and sweeping away with a rope the already cooling pile of ashes, he fed the faint spark until it burst into flame. He has no fear of war: he knows that *huts* are not the booty sought in civil wars.

In other versions of Caesar's failed attempt to cross the Adriatic, the boat's owner is nameless, without any discernible background or occupation. Amyclas appears to be a fisherman (a detail probably derived from the anecdote about Marius and the fisherman); his name suggests a Spartan background, and he certainly exemplifies a Spartan lifestyle.⁵³ He lives far from civilization—Caesar has to travel *per uasta silentia* ("through the desolate silence," Luc. 5.508) along a curving shoreline to reach him (another detail that matches the anecdote about Marius; Lucan's wording also evokes a journey to the underworld), and it appears from his first words (*quisnam mea naufragus . . . tecta petit?*, "what shipwrecked sailor seeks my shelter?", 5.521) that he gets no visitors other than the occasional victim of shipwreck.⁵⁴

His hut, without timber supports and woven of reed and rush, is so frail that Caesar's arrogant pounding on the door makes the roof tremble. This primitive structure parodies the traditional use of the simple hut to exemplify virtuous poverty and ancient Roman values—Amyclas could hardly lead a simpler life. His only furniture consists of a rope and a couch of seaweed, a material whose worthlessness was proverbial. In Horace's *Satire* 2.5 (also alluded to by Petronius, as we have seen), Ulysses seeks advice from Teiresias on how to restore his fortunes now that he has returned, destitute, to Ithaca, and makes the point that without money, noble birth and virtue are more worthless than seaweed: *et genus et uirtus, nisi cum re, uilior alga est* ("without cash, birth and virtue are more worthless than seaweed," *Sat.* 2.5.8).

The poor fisherman Amyclas' seaweed couch and ramshackle hut align him with the virtuous poverty that Horace's rogue Ulysses (who

⁵³ On Amyclas, the founder of the Spartan city Amyclae: Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.10.3; Paus. 3.1.3, 10.9.3, 7.18.4.

⁵⁴ Cf. *per chaos hoc ingens uastique silentia regni* ("through this vast chaos and the silences of the desolate realm," Ov. *Met.* 10.29), from Orpheus' description of his journey into the underworld to find Eurydice.

hopes to get rich by fishing for legacies) scorns. Poverty and a tiny house (*angusti lares*) are, claims Lucan's narrator, gifts of the gods, if properly understood, for poverty leaves one immune to fear of Caesar (Luc. 5.527–31). Lucan's language recalls Vergil's description of Evander's hut (cf. *angusti...tecti*, *Aen.* 8.366), but also the abode of Philemon and Baucis, which, though poor, is nevertheless more upscale than Amyclas' hut.⁵⁵ When Caesar knocks at the door, Amyclas, springing from his bed of seaweed, prepares to receive his unexpected guest hospitably.⁵⁶ His first action is to coax a fire from the hearth, just as Baucis, bustling about to prepare a meal for her divine guests, coaxes flame from a bed of ashes (Luc. 5.523–4; cf. *Met.* 8.641–3). Parallel scenes from Callimachus' *Hecale* (frags. 31–3), Eratosthenes' *Erigone* (probably—Powell frag. 24), and Ovid's *Fasti* (5.506–22: Hyrieus prepares a meal for three visiting deities) suggest that Amyclas' intention here is to light a fire to prepare a meal for his visitor—perhaps a seaside equivalent of Baucis and Philemon's rustic meal of bacon, cheese, olives and various vegetables and fruits.

But Caesar hijacks the hospitality scene just as it is getting started, in one of Lucan's characteristically unsettling gestures of discontinuity, and we never get a glimpse inside Amyclas' cupboard. Rather than asking for shelter, Caesar demands passage across the sea in a speech that insultingly combines peremptory orders with bribery,⁵⁷ and Amyclas in response steps out of the role of rustic host and into the role of weather prophet, predicting in no uncertain terms that it will rain on Caesar's parade. His list of weather signs, based on *Georgics* 1.351–514, include unfavorable sun and moon signs, the movement of trees, the beating of waves, the uncertain course of the dolphin, the diver (*mergus*) making for land, the heron (*ardea*) flying aloft, and the crow lurching along the shore.⁵⁸ The omens are clear, but they do not faze Caesar, who remains supremely confident of his own destiny: *quid tanta strage paretur / ignoras: quaerit pelagi caelique tumultu, / quod prastet Fortuna mihi!* ("you don't know what is being prepared in all this slaughter: through the tumult of sea and sky, Fortune seeks something to offer me!", 5.591–3). Hershkowitz

⁵⁵ Lucan's *cannaeque intexta palustri* ("woven from marsh reed," 5.517) echoes Ov. *Met.* 8.629; the mention of temples alludes to the transformation of Philemon and Baucis' hut into a magnificent temple.

⁵⁶ See Hershkowitz (1998a) 228–31 on Caesar and shipwrecks.

⁵⁷ Helzle (1996) 105 comments on Caesar's "despotische Züge."

⁵⁸ See Morford (1967) 38 and Thompson and Bruère (1968) 13–5 for more detailed discussion of the Vergilian allusions in Amyclas' speech.

draws attention to the relationship between the storm scene in book 5 and the shipwreck simile that foreshadows the wreck of the republic in the first book of the poem.⁵⁹

qualis, cum turbidus Auster
reppulit a Libycis inmensum Syrtibus aequor
fractaque ueliferi sonuerunt pondera mali,
desilit in fluctus deserta puppe magister
nauitaeque et nondum sparsa conpage carinae
naufragium sibi quisque facit, sic urbe relicta
in bellum fugitur.

(Luc. 1.498–504)

Just as when the stormy South wind drove back the endless sea from the Libyan Syrtes, and the weight of the mast that held the sails broke with a crash, the pilot and the sailors leapt into the waves, abandoning ship, and each man made a shipwreck for himself even before the ship's frame had broken up: so, abandoning the city, the people flee towards war.

Hershkowitz argues that the storm represents Caesar, “the lightning bolt, the mad force of nature and of politics. He has effectively shifted the signification of *felix naufragus*, from fortunate shipwreckee to fortunate shipwrecker, dashing to pieces, for his own benefit, not the little boat that carries him on the sea, but the Ship of State.”⁶⁰ The storm scene of book 5 focuses our attention back to the first book of the poem, to the war's beginning, by recalling the metaphorical wreck of the ship of state, and by recalling, through Amyclas' extended imitation of the *Georgics*, the terrible omens of civil war that Lucan recounted at 1.522–83—a passage that is also indebted to the end of *Georgics* 1. For what starts off as an exercise in natural science that will provide farmers with *certis signis*, sure signs, for predicting bad weather, culminates in Vergil's account of the portents that appeared before the death of Caesar (*G.* 1.463–71) to warn of impending civil war.⁶¹ Amyclas' digest of weather signs from *Georgics* 1 thus points beyond the boundaries of the text of the *Bellum Civile*, flashing forward to the death of Caesar and to the final ruin of the ship of state first envisioned in the shipwreck simile of book 1. But, just as Lucan set us up for a rustic hospitality scene and then failed to write it, in this scene he thwarts our expectations

⁵⁹ Hershkowitz (1998a) 229–30.

⁶⁰ Hershkowitz (1998a) 230.

⁶¹ As Gale (2000) 32–3 notes, the weather signs are given by Jupiter to help the farmers; their function as a warning of civil war is somewhat ambivalent, since it is not clear the citizens of Rome have any recourse.

as well. The threatened shipwreck does not happen, but neither does Caesar successfully complete his voyage (unlike Marius, who successfully escapes to Africa in his little boat). Caesar and (presumably) Amyclas are anticlimactically landed back on the shore from whence they came.⁶² The whole episode, which moves the plot forward not at all, exemplifies the narrator's strategy of delay, a strategy that enacts his desire *not* to tell the tale of *bellum civile* ("civil war"). As Henderson says:

The poet abuses narration precisely so as to interrupt its telling of the tale. A chief objective of the recalcitrant bard is to impress upon you the unequal struggle which his text fights to the death.... This narrator loathes the progress of his story of Caesarian triumph, loves *mora*, delay, obstruction, diversion...⁶³

The Amyclas episode is itself a delay, a diversion from Caesar's relentless progress. The interlude, with its glance back at the primitive virtues from which Caesarian Rome is so estranged, marks one of the few moments when Caesar's momentum is halted. Lucan implants a vision of primitive virtue—Amyclas and his oddly constructed hut—right in the heart of his epic, just as Ovid planted his primordial Phrygians Philemon and Baucis at the center of his *Metamorphoses*.⁶⁴ This scene may profitably be read with another scene from a digressive episode that draws on the trope of primitive architecture later in the poem: Cato's epic (and ultimately fruitless) trek through the Libyan desert. But to arrive in Libya, we must take our own side-road through Vergil's *Georgics*.

Primitive Lucan 2: Hard Rain in Libya

At *Georgics* 3.340–8 Vergil (like Lucan, a master of *mora*, "delay") pauses from describing the best way to care for sheep in the heat of the summer to describe the habits of the shepherds of Libya, in a passage that clearly draws on ethnographic assessments of the characteristics and morals of different peoples.⁶⁵ Paired with an excursus on the Scythians,

⁶² Amyclas vanishes from the text during the storm scene.

⁶³ Henderson (1998) 183.

⁶⁴ The whole Amyclas episode, which focuses on a minor, ultimately irrelevant episode rather than on the large-scale epic plot, is in keeping with Callimachean tendencies to focus on small, everyday things instead of on the heroic, and to arrest narrative; the "hut" scenes in *Hecale*, *Aetia*, and *Metamorphoses* 8 are all examples of this digressive style.

⁶⁵ Thomas (1988a) 108 *ad G.* 3.349–83.

the passage acts as a foil to Vergil's description of the Italian countryside and its inhabitants, allowing the reader to evaluate the merits and flaws of Italy by comparison with other peoples:

Quid tibi pastores Libyae, quid pascua uersu
 prosequar et *raris habitata mapalia tectis*?
 saepe diem noctemque et totum ex ordine mensem
 pascitur itque pecus longa in deserta sine ullis
 hospitiiis: tantum campi iacet. omnia secum
 armentarius Afer agit, tectumque laremque
 armaque *Amyclaeumque canem* Cressamque pharetram;
 non secus ac patriis acer Romanus in armis
 iniusto sub fasce uiam cum carpit, et hosti
 ante expectatum positus stat in agmine castris.

(Verg. *G.* 3.340–8 [italics mine])

Why should I trace in song for you the wandering shepherds of Libya, their pastures and *their settlements with houses few and far between*? The plains are so large that often the flock feeds and roams day and night through the vast desert, without a roof to sleep under, for a month at a time. The African herdsman takes everything with him: his tent, his household gods, his weapons, his *Spartan hound* and his Cretan quiver—not so different from when the tough Roman, wearing his nation's arms, makes his way under an unjust burden, and before the enemy expects him, halts in formation and sets up camp.

These shepherds live in *raris habitata mapalia tectis* ("camps inhabited by sparse huts," 3.341), and carry their possessions (tent, gods, weapons, Spartan hound, Cretan quiver). Thomas argues that the real focus of the line is not on the dog or the quiver, but on the places that produce them—Amyclae, a town in Sparta, and Crete. Sparta and Crete, he notes, "...are regarded in the ethnographical tradition as the two morally exemplary states, disdaining organized agriculture and the use of gold and silver... the assignation to the Libyan of Spartan and Cretan trappings, absurd if taken literally, implies a moral strength which contrasts with the miserable conditions of Libya..."⁶⁶ It is likely that Lucan's Amyclas takes his name from this passage, which associates the simple Libyan shepherd with moral values that contrast sharply with the corruption caused by wealth and greed in Italy.

The peculiar form of Amyclas' dwelling—no ordinary hut, but constructed from the keel of his boat—shows that Lucan had Libya on his mind when he was creating the character of Amyclas, for it is clearly

⁶⁶ Thomas (1988a) 106–7 *ad* Verg. *G.* 3.345.

taken from *Bellum Iugurthinum* 18, where Sallust describes the Numidians' characteristic form of architecture, which he says originated from the use of overturned boats as houses. The symbolic architecture of this Greek fisherman's hut is rooted in the landscape of Libya (a landscape to which Lucan will return in book 9). In Sallust's description of the origins of civilization in Africa, the native tribes, the Gaetulians and Libyans, are marked as uncivilized by diet (they either ate wild animal flesh or fodder, like cattle); by lack of laws; and by lack of architecture (they wandered about and slept in whatever place they found themselves at night). Then the remains of the army of Hercules, the great civilizer, made their way into Africa. The Persian units of the army settled near the ocean and intermarried with the Gaetolian tribes. Architecture in Africa originated, according to Sallust's account, from the Persian's recycling of their boats: they inverted the keels and used them for *tugurii* ("huts"). This characteristic architectural feature persisted into Sallust's own day: the curved shape of Numidian *mapalia* ("camps") resembles the keel of a boat.

In this brief ethnographical excursus, the development of *mapalia* is a marker of the state of Numidian civilization. In contrast to the Mauri, who live closer to the coast and quickly establish settled towns and trade, the Numidians, who are the descendants of the Persians and native Gaetulians, were prevented from establishing commercial ties with the Spaniards because of the language barrier, and their remote location. As Robert Morstein-Marx recently noted,

their rejection of maritime life and indeed of all commercial exchange could hardly be more forcefully demonstrated than by their expedient of turning their ships over to provide nomadic shelters for their landward migration...the primacy of the Numidians is clear, and the reasons for that primacy are clearly implied: the Numidians had maintained the nomadic hardiness of the native Gaetuli, and, like them, had remained free of the enfeebling effects of sea-borne *luxuria*.⁶⁷

Sallust does not bother to chronicle advances in African cuisine or law codes after the introduction of the Persian remnants of Hercules' army; it is the development of *mapalia*, nomadic architecture, that he chooses to represent the primitive hardiness of the nomads.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Morstein-Marx (2001) 185–6.

⁶⁸ At *Iug.* 89, Sallust associates the primitive diet of the Numidian nomad with freedom from the corrupting effects of *luxuria*: *Numidae plerumque lacte et ferina carne uescebantur et neque salem neque alia iritamenta gulae quaerebant: cibus illis aduersum famem*

For Sallust, then, the hut is a marker of the transition from savagery to a primitive form of civilized life, just as, in his view of Roman history, extravagant building marks the transition from virtue to decadence.⁶⁹ In what follows, I argue that Lucan, like Sallust, writes Roman collapse into his description of Cato's march across Libya through a juxtaposition of images evoking primitive Rome, primitive architecture, and the ethnographic tradition.

Errantia Regna

As Cato approaches Libya at the beginning of book 9, he, like Encolpius approaching Croton, follows in the footsteps of earlier travelers. As he journeys from Greece to North Africa, after passing Malea, Taenaros, and Corcyra, Cato stops to sack the city of Phycus in Cyrenaica, arrives at the harbor of Palinurus, and later sacks Cyrene. The harbor recalls the exploits of Aeneas; the sacked cities remind us of another casual city-sacker, Odysseus, a survivor who loses all of his companions as he single-mindedly pursues his goals of home and booty. This allusion bodes ill for the Roman army—will they, like the hapless crew of Odysseus, perish as their leader pursues the path of glory?

Lucan provides us with an overview of the geography of Libya, which he divides into two parts—the fertile western section and the infertile desert:

Libycae quod fertile terrae est
 uergit in occasus, sed et haec non fontibus ullis
 soluitur: Arctoos raris Aquilonibus imbres
 accipit et nostris reficit sua rura serenis.
 in nullas uitaitur opes; non aere neque auro
 excoquitur, nullo glaebiarum crimine pura
 et penitus terra est. Tantum Maurusia genti
 robora diuitiae, quarum non nouerat usum.

atque sitim, non libidini neque luxuriare erat ("For the most part, the Numidians fed off of milk and the flesh of wild animals, and sought neither salt nor any other stimulants to appetite. For them, food was not for pleasure and self-indulgence, but a counter to hunger and thirst."). Morstein-Marx (2001) 181 discusses ethnographic discourse that "tends to elevate the moral status of primitives to the extent that they are free of the effects of *luxuria*."

⁶⁹ Cf. Sall. *Cat.* 12.3–4, 13.1, 20.11 for condemnations of contemporary luxurious buildings.

sed citri contenta comis uiuebat et umbra.
 in nemus ignotum nostrae uenere secures,
 extremoque epulas mensasque petimus ab orbe.

(Luc. 9.420–30)

The fertile part of Libya lies in the West, but even this is not softened by any streams: it receives occasional northern rains when the North winds blow and refreshes its fields when our weather is clear. It is not plundered for wealth; it is not smelted for copper or gold; its clods are free of crime and the earth is pure to its depths. The only wealth for the people is the wood of Mauretania, but they don't know how to use it; rather they live contentedly in the leafy shade of the citron tree. But our axes have come to the unknown groves and we have sought banquets and tables from the ends of the earth.

These fertile parts of Libya have golden-age abundance and lack a telltale sign of criminal humanity (mining, the violation of the earth in search of wealth). The inhabitants, ignorant of the market value of their citron trees, are, like the land itself, innocent of corruption. But Roman axes have already begun to plunder the innocent land, and the primitive inhabitants will clearly be no match for the hyper-civilized Romans, whose *luxuria* and greed are emblemized by their search for strange delicacies and luxury goods from all corners of the globe.

But whereas the Romans represent a dangerous threat to the innocent fertility of Western Libya, the infertile desert regions are an equally dangerous threat to Cato's hard-pressed army. The Syrtes, which lie between Cato and his goal, are a frighteningly unstable mix of water and earth; to avoid them, Cato decides on a path that takes him through the desert, which proves to be equally shifting and treacherous. Like the Syrtes, the sandstorm in the desert (Luc. 9.449–60) is composed of a disorienting mixture of opposing elements, in this case earth and air. The flat land breeds tornadoes that suck the earth into the air and tear up trees and houses. Like Dorothy in *Wizard of Oz*, who looks out of the window and sees everyday objects—chickens, old ladies in rocking chairs, and the like—sailing along in the force of the tornado, Lucan's poor Nasamonian watches as his *regna . . . errantia* (“drifting realms,” 9.458) and even his house fly through the air around him. But this sort of precipitation is, presumably, normal for the inhabitants of Libya, and wandering is characteristic of their nomadic state. Lucan has already told us that Amyclas, whose name, poverty, and Libyan-style dwelling link him with the virtuous Libyan nomads of *Georgics* 3, has no fear of losing his hut; we can assume that the Nasamonian paupers watch the dispersal of their portable goods with equally Stoic equanimity.

But the terrified Romans wrap themselves in their cloaks and fling themselves to the ground when confronted by the sandstorm, and the wind snatches their weapons away. The airborne goods of the Nasamonians and the flying weapons of the Roman soldiers lead the narrator to wonder where the weapons will land and who will find them; the primitive setting and the association of the Libyan nomad with virtuous poverty culminate in a simile evoking Rome's own primitive past in the time of the virtuous law-giver Numa:

sic illa profecto
sacrifico cecidere Numae, quae lecta iuventus
patricia cervice movet: spoliaverat Auster
aut Boreas populos ancilia nostra ferentes.

(Luc. 9.477–80)

Surely this was how the shields that the chosen youth bear on their shoulders fell before Numa as he was sacrificing: the North or South wind stripped our *ancilia* from the tribes that carried them.

The shields (*scuta*) torn from the hands of Cato's soldiers by violent winds will appear in some other remote land as a prodigy, interpreted by the inhabitants as evidence of divine intervention. This, claims the narrator, is in fact the truth behind what happened to Numa: either the North or South wind plundered the shields from some other people and brought them to Rome. According to Ovid and Plutarch, one shield fell from heaven as a guarantor of the city's security, and Numa, to ensure its safety, had identical copies made, which are carried by the Salii.⁷⁰ But in the famous shield scene from *Aeneid* 8, Vergil relates that multiple shields fell from heaven. The shield portrays Manlius defending the Capitol and its Romulean hut, the sacred geese who warned of the arrival of the Gauls, the Salii, the Luperci, the *ancilia*, and the Roman matrons:

hic exsultantis Salios nudosque Lupercos
lanigerosque apices et lapsa ancilia caelo
extuderat, castae ducebant sacra per urbem
pilentis matres in mollibus.

(Verg. *Aen.* 8.663–6)

⁷⁰ Plut. *Num.* 13, Ov. *Fast.* 3.375–92, and Liv. 1.20.4 contain accounts of Numa's order to duplicate the heaven-sent shield. See Heinrich (1996) 123–4 for an excellent discussion relating Lucan's treatment of the *ancilia* to the larger topic of the providential basis of the Roman empire.

Over here, he engraved the leaping Salii and the naked Luperci, with their woolly hats and the shields fallen from heaven, and chaste wives in their cushioned litters were bringing the sacred objects through the city.

On Aeneas' programmatic shield we find two moments of great significance to Roman history put side by side in conjunction with the *ancilia*: Manlius' defense of the Capitol, represented symbolically by the hut of Romulus, and the ceremony of the Salii, marking a divine promise of protection to the city. Hardie provides an Augustan interpretation of the symbolic significance of the *ancilia* on the shield:

...we may use the *ancilia* to interpret the Shield which Venus brings to Aeneas from the sky. Aeneas understands Venus' delivery of the armour forged by Vulcan as a guarantee of his victory over Turnus (8.537 ff.); the Augustan reader, enjoying Virgil's hindsight, might take the Shield as a guarantee of the world-empire which it represents.⁷¹

Hardie's Augustan reading elides one important point: in Vergil's account, not only the original but *all* of the shields have fallen from heaven (*lapsa ancilia caelo*, 8.664), a seemingly minor detail which nevertheless differs significantly from Ovid's account (and those of Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Plutarch) of the shields.⁷² For if *all* of the shields have fallen from heaven, then the symbolic import of the single shield, Jupiter's token of empire, is lost: there *is* no original shield to stand as the image and guarantor of Rome's *imperium*, and without an original the need for multiple copies is unclear. Vergil's use of the plural suggests that there is no original *ancile*, no single pledge of a stable alliance between the divine order and the course of Roman history.

Lucan rewrites and displaces the *ancilia* episode, setting it far from the Capitoline, in the extremities of the Libyan desert, but still using primitive architecture as a way of thinking and writing Rome. His treatment reveals a close reading of the ambiguities of the *ancilia*, undermining their traditional meaning in a number of ways. First, he goes along with the Vergilian, not the Ovidian, account, for he has *multiple* shields fall to earth in front of the sacrificing Numa.⁷³ But he goes far beyond Vergilian ambiguity in his emphasis on the meaninglessness of the shields,

⁷¹ Hardie (1986) 367.

⁷² Livy's text does not mention the creation of imitation shields, but simply refers to the shields carried by the Salii as *caelestia arma*.

⁷³ Lucan's *delapsaque caelo / arma* ("arms fallen from heaven," 9.475–6) echoes Vergil's *lapsa ancilia caelo* ("shields fallen from heaven," *Aen.* 8.664).

their failure to stand as symbolic icons of successful Roman *imperium*, for he reduces what in Roman religious practice was revered as a sign of divine approval of Roman power to the status of a random event through his pseudo-scientific explanation of the sandstorm.

It is not much of an interpretive stretch to read this scene of shields falling from the sky as a metaphor for the transfer of *imperium* away from Rome, center of the world, to the peripheral lands of the barbarians. If Lucan, following Vergil, calls the traditional meaning of the *ancilia* into question, he nevertheless keeps them available to deploy in his rewriting of Roman history: they appear as booty plundered from unnamed peoples by the winds and dropped in front of Numa. As such they are fitting symbols of Rome's *imperium*, founded as it is on the conquest and plundering of foreign lands. But the price of empire is ruin—a point made rather amusingly by another “hard rain” on the Libyan earth. Only a few lines after the narrator reflects on the rain of Roman weapons, Lucan describes a *second* form of peculiar precipitation inflicted on the long-suffering Libyans:

saxa tulit penitus discussis proruta muris
effuditque procul miranda sorte malorum:
qui nullas videre domos, videre ruinas.

(Luc. 9.490–2)

The wind carried stones torn from smashed ramparts
And disgorged them far away—an amazing stroke of bad luck:
Men who had never seen houses saw ruins rain down.

Stones swept into the air from ruined walls fall on an unsuspecting people entirely unfamiliar with architecture. Assuming the prevailing winds bring these pre-fab ruins to the same people on whom they showered the *scuta* shortly before (Luc. 9.475–7), it seems that possession of the shields has catapulted them into a speeded up course of empire.⁷⁴ This unseemly, forced progress from a primitive state to ruin without any state in between thus provides a parallel to the Romans' plundering of Libya's natural resources—when the Roman axes arrive, the land goes from being innocent of corruption to providing citron wood and strange dainties for Roman gourmands, just as the natives, when the Roman *scuta* descend upon them, go from life without architecture to

⁷⁴ Cf. Henderson (1988) 155: “within its ‘name’ the epicthet *Emathian* catches up the ‘pulverisation’ of *Bellum Ciuile*, the ruination of ruination, the *puluis* of battle and of duststorm, the *harena* of shore, coast, desert and of amphitheatre....”

life among the ruins in an instant.⁷⁵ As Cato's exhausted men inadvertently pass on the baleful tokens of empire, they themselves are left to wander without shelter through the blank spaces of history. Rome has passed far beyond the stage of civilization and the virtues represented by the primitive hut.

Living Like a Human Being

The buildings do not convey the sense of starting from Point A, rude huts on the Palatine, and ending at point B, the Augustan forum. Indeed, the absence of closure is a significant part of the problem.⁷⁶

Is the meaning of buildings, or diet, essentially textual and therefore inherently unstable and deconstructible? Did "the Romans" perceive it to be so? Certainly they used buildings and food to think with, as we do. For the emperors and the elite, food and architecture are integral to the public image they choose to present. As Elsner puts it, "one can see architecture as a three-dimensional and visual dynamic of self-presentation, in which rulers used buildings both as a method of self-presentation to the populace and as a means of distinguishing themselves from their imperial predecessors."⁷⁷ Similarly, an emperor's generosity or parsimony in providing public feasts and his demeanor at banquets were considered highly significant by historians and biographers (not to mention satirists and panegyrists). Augustus set the standard, combining modesty in his personal home and eating habits with magnificent public buildings and banquets. His successors were lavish and tendentious builders and hosts, but both alimentary and architectural forms of display were open to interpretation, able to be read either as signs of greatness and generosity, or of decadence and vice.⁷⁸ Writers of the period display a keen interest in imperial buildings; enumeration of an emperor's building projects became a standard feature of imperial

⁷⁵ This instant leap from immaturity to ruin follows the pattern observed by Gowers (1994) 139: "Nero's reign tried unnaturally to collapse a lifetime into its short span: it was both callow and raw, and prematurely rotten." David Fredrick (*per litteras*) notes that the "pre-fab" ruins are also reminiscent of Verg. *G.* 1.493–7, where the ploughman working the land where the battle of Philippi took place is imagined as one day turning up the javelins and bones of fallen Roman soldiers.

⁷⁶ Fredrick (2003) 205.

⁷⁷ Elsner (1994) 112.

⁷⁸ Elsner (1994) 115.

history and biography. Even the hostile sources that chronicle Nero's reign give him some credit for useful innovations in building and for an attempt to regulate excessive luxury in food consumption by the general public: Suetonius notes his innovations in architecture that helped to prevent and control fires, and his attempts to limit extravagant food consumption at public banquets and in taverns (Suet. *Ner.* 16). Nevertheless, as Elsner remarks, it would be upon Nero, a prolific and innovative builder, that "the full weight of Roman rhetoric's moral censure of extravagant building would descend."⁷⁹ Negative accounts of his buildings and his entertainments far exceed the positive ones. Tacitus, offended by the emperor's lavish entertainments, complains that Nero has turned all of Rome into his own house.⁸⁰ The spectacular scale and luxury of the *Domus Aurea* complex are adduced by Suetonius as indicators of Nero's personal greed and extravagance:

Non in alia re tamen damnosior quam in aedificando. domum a Palatio Esquilias usque fecit, quam primo transitoriam, mox incendio absumptam restitutamque auream nominavit. De cuius spatio atque cultu suffecerit haec rettulisse. Vestibulum eius fuit, in quo colossus CXX pedum staret ipsius effigie; tanta laxitas, ut porticus triplices miliarias haberet; item stagnum maris instar, circumsaeptum aedificiis ad urbium speciem; rura insuper arvis atque vinetis et pascuis silvisque varia, cum multitudine omnis generis pecudum ac ferarum. In ceteris partibus cuncta auro lita, distincta gemmis unionumque conchis erant; cenationes laqueatae tabulis eburneis versatilibus, ut flores, fistulatis, ut unguenta desuper spargerentur; praecipua cenationum rotunda, quae perpetuo diebus ac noctibus vice mundi circumageretur; balineae marinis et albulis fluentes aquis. Eius modi domum cum absolutam dedicaret, hactenus comprobavit, *ut se diceret quasi hominem tandem habitare coepisse.*

(Suet. *Ner.* 32)

In nothing was he more profligate than in building. He extended his house from the Palatine as far as the Esquiline; first he called it the *Domus Transitoria*, but after it was destroyed by fire and restored, he called it the Golden House. Let it suffice to say these things about its size and decoration: it had a porch in which there was a statue of himself 120 feet tall; its size was so great that it had triple porticoes a mile long, likewise a lake the size of a sea, surrounded by buildings that looked like a city; on top of this were fields and vineyards and pastures and woods with a

⁷⁹ Elsner (1994) 115.

⁸⁰ *Ipse quo fidem adquireret nihil usquam perinde laetum sibi, publicis locis struere conuiuia totaque urbe quasi domo uti* ("Nero, to demonstrate that no other place anywhere was as pleasing to him, prepared banquets in public places and used the whole city as if it were his own house," Tac. *Ann.* 15.37.1).

multitude of animals, both domesticated and wild, of every species. In some parts everything was covered with gold, decorated with gems and mother of pearl; the coffered ceilings of the dining room revolved and had ivory compartments to scatter flowers and pipes to sprinkle perfume. The main banqueting room was circular, and revolved perpetually, night and day, like the heavens. The baths flowed with water from the sea and from the springs of Albula. When he dedicated this house after it was finished, he said in qualified approval, "*At last I can begin to live like a human being.*"

For Suetonius, Nero's extravagant architecture was an index of vice; he draws on the tradition of moralizing attacks on *luxuria*.⁸¹ But architecture has implications other than moral ones. Nero's building program was the physical manifestation and culmination of the Julio-Claudian cultural revolution, the transfer of power from elite families to specialists patronized by the imperial house.⁸²

In this context, Nero's famous remark, "at last I'm beginning to live like a human being," deserves some thought. What does it mean to live like a human being, and how was that expressed through architecture? Nero was not alone in thinking that architecture and civilization are intimately connected. For Vitruvius, architecture is essential to living like a human being as opposed to living like an animal. In *De Architectura* he locates the origin of civilization at the moment when men first built primitive huts, and views architecture as the spur to the development of all the other arts and sciences.⁸³ Nero, that most artistic of emperors, was evidently a thinker of the Vitruvian school, viewing the perfection of architecture as expressive of, perhaps even constituting, the perfection of human culture. From what we know of the *Domus Aurea*, to live like a human being for Nero was to live in an environment where the traditional boundaries of public and private, rural and urban, house and city, *urbs* and *orbis* are dissolved *by design*: as Tacitus puts it, *quae natura denegauisset per artem temptare* ("to try to do *through art* what nature won't do," Tac. *Ann.* 15.42 [my emphasis]).⁸⁴ But for Tacitus and others, Nero's

⁸¹ Elsner (1994) 125 n. 17 lists a number of texts that denounce luxury through the image of luxurious buildings; see also Edwards (1993) 137–72.

⁸² Fredrick (2003) 206–7; Wallace-Hadrill (1997) 3–22.

⁸³ *Tunc uero ex fabricationibus aedificiorum gradatim progressi ad ceteras artes et disciplinas, e fera agrestique uita ad mansuetam perduxerunt humanitatem* ("then, indeed, from the construction of buildings they progressed step by step to the other arts and disciplines, and led themselves from a wild and rustic life to civilized humanity," Vitr. *De Arch.* 2.1.6).

⁸⁴ See Elsner (1994) 12–23 for further discussion later writers' comments on the transgressive nature of the *Domus Aurea*.

radical architecture was threatening precisely because it was limitless and because it represented a totalizing control over public space (once the arena dominated by the elite) by a single individual. The *Domus Aurea* is in this sense the architectural end point of the development of the principate into empire, which was accompanied by “a refocusing of the power of the state, the *res publica*, from outside to inside, from public spaces, the *comitia* and Curia, to ‘private’ spaces, the household or ‘court’ of the emperor.”⁸⁵ From the perspective of the senatorial elite, when Nero “lived like a human being,” he treated the *urbs* as if it were his private house.

Fredrick has noted (à propos of the emperor Domitian’s architectural program) that the Romans were “free to construct, undo and reconstruct the meaning of this or that building as needed,” and imperial building programs reflect this freedom.⁸⁶ Fredrick’s concern is the architecture of surveillance he identifies as the hallmark of the Flavians, but our texts offer something different, a symbolic architecture of exposure and collapse. Oenothra’s filthy hovel with its rickety furniture, Amyclas’ half-boat half-house, and the ruins that rain down in the Libyan desert are all examples of this willful re- or de-construction of the traditional primitive hut, which we must always visualize projected against the backdrop of the spectacular buildings of Neronian Rome. Lucan’s evocations of the primitive hut both show nostalgia for lost Roman virtue and forecast Rome’s probable post-imperial fate. The primitive squalor and rancid diet of Oenothra and the sinister eating habits of the Crotonians go even farther than Lucan, collapsing all stages of civilization together and exploding the possibility that human culture ever had or could ever have a golden age. At Croton, the food and the architecture evoke that tradition only to expose it as a sham, simultaneously undercutting the value of tradition and the possibility of progress. Petronius’ Crotonians, *cadavera quae lacerantur aut corui qui lacerant* (“corpses being ravaged and crows ravaging them,” *Sat.* 116.9), offer a chilling dystopic vision of what it meant to “live like a human being” in Nero’s Rome.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Fredrick (2003) 207.

⁸⁶ Fredrick (2003) 204.

⁸⁷ My thanks to David Fredrick, Maureen Jameson, Margaret Malamud, and Rachel Sternberg for their improving comments.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

VISIONS OF GOLD: HOPES FOR THE NEW AGE IN CALPURNIUS SICULUS' *ECLOGUES*

John Garthwaite and Beatrice Martin

The highly allusive nature of Calpurnius' poetry has long been recognized, with backward glances particularly to the pastorals of Vergil and Theocritus, though Ovid, Horace, and Neronian literature, especially Lucan and the Senecan tragedies, also feature prominently in this intertextual framework. The frequency and apparently unadorned simplicity of these allusions, seemingly paying literary homage to their sources rather than entering into dialogue—polemical or otherwise—with them has led some scholars to judge Calpurnius' poems as merely imitative.¹ But as Newlands, for example, has demonstrated, Calpurnius is no uncritical copyist.² Nor should we content ourselves merely with cataloguing borrowed words and phrases. Rather, we must be conscious of both the wider context of the original and the ways in which Calpurnius manipulates these literary sources, particularly in regard to the established features of the pastoral genre. Only then can we develop an understanding of the social and political attitudes that permeate his poems, especially his response to the advent of a new emperor promising restored harmony between palace and senate, peace and prosperity for both city and country and, most crucially for his own situation, renewed hope of support for the long neglected and impoverished literary arts.

Essays on Calpurnius' *Eclogues* begin almost invariably with reference to the continuing controversy about the date of authorship. Estimates range from the conventional Neronian dating to the age of Alexander Severus (222–235 CE) or even later in the third century.³ Even those scholars who opt for a later dating, however, still face the issue of why Calpurnius seemingly goes to such lengths to set his poems dramatically in the age of Nero. For he is not only steeped in Neronian literature

¹ Sullivan (1985) 52.

² Newlands (1987) 218–31. Cf. also Leach (1973) 55.

³ For a recent analysis of the question and survey of the extensive bibliography, see Horsfall (1997) 166–96.

but, in Horsfall's words, "has actually worked hard on his Neronian background."⁴ Indeed, a plausible case can be made for setting at least the three so-called "political" eclogues (1, 4 and 7) specifically in the early years of the young Nero's reign, from 54–57 CE. Thus the comet that has been visible in the heavens for twenty days, its bright but tranquil radiance heralding a new age of peace (*Ecl.* 1.77–83), could refer to that seen shortly before Claudius' death and subsequently interpreted as an omen of his imminent demise (Suet. *Claud.* 46; Cass. Dio 60.35.1; Plin. *HN* 2.92).⁵ The youthful regent (*iuuenem*, *Ecl.* 1.44) who will inaugurate this golden age has also recently "won the case for his mother's family, the Julii" (*maternis causam...uicit Iulis*, 45).⁶ The young Nero had indeed pleaded successfully in court on behalf of the city of Ilium.⁷ Calpurnius' phrase also recalls Vergil's conflation of Troy and Rome in the names Ilus and Iulus at *Aeneid* 1.267–8 as part of Jupiter's promise (288) of a Julian principate. That lineage has now been revived in the person of Nero after the Claudian interruption.⁸ Finally, the Roman amphitheatre and its displays, described by the awestruck Corydon in the last of the seven eclogues, could be that completed by Nero and opened with magnificent beast hunts in 57 CE (cf. Tac. *Ann.* 13.31; Suet. *Nero* 12.1).

This chronological progression is paralleled by a thematic development that includes not only *Eclogues* 1, 4 and 7 but also the intervening poems. Each of the three political eclogues features the shepherd Corydon. In the first, having retreated with his fellow herdsman, Ornytus, from the oppressive heat of the late summer sun to the shade of a cool woodland, he comes across what he takes to be a divinely inspired proclamation, carved into the trunk of a beech tree. The text heralds the advent of a new prince, hailed as a living god (*deus ipse*, 1.46), and a glorious new age, both already at hand. Astounded by the words, the two rustics determine to adapt them to the music of their pipes

⁴ Horsfall (1993a) 270.

⁵ According to Chinese astronomical records, the comet was visible in 54 between 9 June and 9 July: Bicknell (1969) 1074. Cf. Horsfall (1997) 167 for further comment on apparent chronological inconsistencies in Calpurnius' narrative here.

⁶ Cf. Wiseman (1982) 57–8 for translation and interpretation of the phrase. It is worth adding that understanding *causam...uicit* as victory in a legal suit is encouraged by the preceding image of Justice (*Themis*) returning to earth as part of the restored golden age (1.43–4).

⁷ Tacitus (*Ann.* 12.58.1) notes that in his speech Nero elaborated on the Trojan ancestry of the Romans and on Aeneas as the founder of the *gens Iulia*.

⁸ Horsfall (1997) 169.

and so take the composition to their associate, Meliboeus, who they hope will, in turn, manage to bring it to the attention of the *princeps* himself. The close of the first poem thus anticipates the opening of *Eclogue* 4 in which the same Meliboeus comes across an unusually silent and unsettled Corydon. For the latter, he soon learns, rather than contentedly rehearsing his customary pastoral song, is now pondering an altogether weightier theme, namely the celebration of this golden epoch in words fit for its new ruler, hailed once more as a god on earth (*deus ipse*, 4.7). Despite Meliboeus' rather slighting response that the divinities of great Rome are not to be extolled in the same way as one would sing of a sheepfold, Corydon and his brother rehearse alternating stanzas that repeat the initial themes of the prophecy voiced in *Eclogue* 1. Again, the young Caesar is an earthly divinity (*praesenti numine*, 4.84) to whose protective presence nature responds with a burst of new life and productivity. Country-dwellers and country gods alike now thrive in the idyllic tranquility brought by the new order. The two singers end by petitioning Meliboeus to take their eulogy to its divine addressee in Rome.

Meliboeus' response at the close of the poem is non-committal. In *Eclogue* 7, however, we learn that Corydon himself has journeyed to (and already returned from) the great city to see his emperor in person. Indeed, the visit has left him alienated from the pastoral world, for now he views the outlook and concerns of his fellow rustics as merely boorish compared to the sophisticated pleasures enjoyed by the capital's inhabitants. In particular, nothing in the natural world can now rival the vast new amphitheatre whose man-made marvels Corydon had barely been able to comprehend, a spectacle that had even afforded him a distant glimpse of the divine presence eulogized in *Eclogues* 1 and 4.

As Davis has perceptively demonstrated, the two pairs of intervening poems—2 and 3, 5 and 6—are not only linked with each other but harmonize with the developing tone and themes of the surrounding political eclogues.⁹ All four are concerned with rustic matters now familiar to the pastoral genre, rather than with the contemporary political situation. In *Eclogue* 2 two shepherds celebrate their love for the same young girl by engaging in a contest of song. The peaceful rural setting provides an idyllic backdrop to the gentle rivalry that ends with honors shared and friendship maintained. Similarly, in the following poem, though love is

⁹ Davis (1987) 32–54.

cast as a potentially more destructive force, the ending is no less positive. For the song, it is promised, will undoubtedly restore to its singer the affections of the young girl who has been temporarily distracted by another suitor. In contrast, however, the mood of the second pair of poems becomes more somber. In *Eclogue* 5 harsh notes intrude into the advice given by the aged herdsman Mopsus to his young alumnus. For, here, hard toil as well as drought and disease become features of the care of the flocks. So, too, there is a new emphasis on proof of ownership and profit as part of the shepherd's concern. Finally, in the sixth eclogue the normally placid bucolic setting is now seen as disruptive to pastoral song (62–5). Moreover, on this occasion, the two contestants become so hostile to each other that the chosen judge refuses to arbitrate. Far from promoting a friendly and productive rivalry, the exchanges between the pair assume at the poem's close the dimensions of a legal wrangle (*litibus . . . uestris*, 6.94). The poem emphasizes discord in both the natural and human domains. Thus, the last two eclogues in this quartet undermine the ordered and harmonious world of the first two. Moreover, the fragmentation of the natural environment and the growing disunity of its inhabitants, increasingly evident in the course of these four poems, parallel Corydon's change in the three political eclogues from a sense of harmony with his rustic peers and their communal lifestyle to disaffection and frustration with both.

Even in his echoes of earlier pastoral Calpurnius seems to choose his intertextual references with an eye to underscoring the increasingly negative and fractious tone of his poems. The beech tree (*sacra . . . fago*, 1.20) on whose trunk Ornytus and Corydon find carved, to their amazement, Faunus' proclamation of the new emperor and a golden era, clearly recalls Vergil's *Eclogues*. Indeed, on the basis of its appearance in the first line of Vergil's *Eclogue* 1 (*tu patulae recubans sub tegmine fagi*, "as you recline under the shade of the spreading beech") and in the first few lines of several other eclogues, Lipka calls the beech a uniquely Vergilian "Leitmotiv."¹⁰ Here, however, as in earlier Hellenistic verse, the tree is associated predominantly with romantic or elegiac poetry in a rustic environment, as in Mopsus' verses for Daphnis, carved into green beech bark (Verg. *Ecl.* 5.13). Newlands extends the connotations of Vergil's imagery, calling the tree "a reminder of stability, peace, and continuity, ideal conditions for pastoral song."¹¹ It is perhaps surprising,

¹⁰ Lipka (2002) 134.

¹¹ Newlands (1987) 221.

therefore, that Calpurnius selects, as his medium for Faunus' stridently political prophecy, a tree most commonly associated with the composition of personal, amatory verse. For in Vergil's *Eclogues* omens of a political nature are linked rather with the oak, either the *quercus* (1.17) or *ilex* (9.15). Lipka does argue that the Greek *φηγός* can denote both the oak and the beech; furthermore, that Calpurnius' description of the beech as sacred can be explained by connections in earlier writers between *φηγός* and Pan and between *fagus* and Jupiter.¹² In any case, however, Calpurnius' choice of *fagus* would invariably draw his reader back to Vergil. And Ornytus' depiction of the beech as sacred will sharpen the contrast with Corydon's later description of the tree, also overtly Vergilian in its reference. For when he returns grudgingly to the country from his visit to Rome Corydon upbraids his fellow rustics for preferring, simple-mindedly, to look merely at old beech trees (*ueteres fagos*, Calp. *Ecl.* 7.5) rather than at the new spectacles of the great city. In Vergil's penultimate eclogue, these ancient trees, their tops now shattered (*ueteres, iam fracta cacumina, fagos*, 9.9), have come to represent the destruction on both the physical and emotional plane of the pastoral paradise. No longer able to provide protective shade and poetic inspiration for the shepherds, as they had done at the beginning of Vergil's collection, the trees now symbolize the loss of rustic harmony.

Calpurnius captures the same decline from optimism to disillusionment, unity to discord, from the beginning to the end of his own series of poems. Once the beech was not only sacred; it was also bursting with life, its fresh green bark (1.22–3) an appropriate medium for the proclamation of the advent of a youthful emperor and a new era. Now, at least to Corydon's eyes, it is nothing but old wood, an embodiment of his frustration with his present circumstances and lost opportunities. The reader might well wonder if the glorious prediction it once carried has now similarly decayed. Certainly, Corydon's sluggish return from Rome (*lentus ab urbe uenis*, Corydon, Calp. *Ecl.* 7.1), ironically reflecting the easy relaxation of Vergil's Tityrus (*tu, Tityre, lentus in umbra / formosam resonare doces Amaryllida siluas*, "you, Tityrus, idling in the shade, teach the woods to echo 'beautiful Amaryllis,'" Verg. *Ecl.* 1.4–5), suggests a mood totally at odds with Tityrus' joyful return from the city following his successful petition to his youthful prince. Yet Corydon had earlier portrayed himself as the equal of Tityrus enjoying, thanks to the

¹² Lipka (2002) 133–8. Of course, in Calpurnius' poem the words written by the god Faunus on the bark are also sacred (*sacros...uersus*, 1.30).

generosity of his patron Meliboeus, that same rustic ease and plenty: *per te securo saturi recubamus in umbra / et fruimur silvis Amaryllidos* ("thanks to you we stretch out in the shade, well-fed and untroubled, enjoying Amaryllis' woodlands," Calp. *Ecl.* 4.37–8). Corydon's journey to Rome and back has lost him, to his own way of thinking at least, this idyllic serenity and companionship. For now, after his return, he can only think of Lycotas, though his elder and thus deserving of respect, as thick-witted and obtuse (7.4).

Nevertheless, we must grant that Corydon's current disgruntlement is balanced or, rather, occasioned by the unequalled joy he had experienced at his first sight of the city, a pleasure that nothing in the countryside could match (7.16–8). Indeed, he says he had stood agape and dumbfounded at the sight of the dazzling new amphitheatre (37–8), a state humorously confirmed by the city-dweller who calls him a stupefied bumpkin (39). We might conclude that the ensuing description of the architectural and cultural splendors of Rome, under the patronage of the new Caesar, fashions a positive ending to the collection. But again we must set this eclogue in the context of the preceding poems, viewing it particularly in the light of Corydon's purpose in making the journey to Rome in the first place.

We return, then, to *Eclogue* 1 and Faunus' prophecy of the advent of a new reign of peace and prosperity that had inspired Corydon to make this expedition. Even the changes of season and setting sketched at the outset of the poem prefigure, it has been suggested, the coming political reformations.¹³ The imminent tempering of the hot sun in the transition from summer to autumn and the retreat of the shepherds from the burning heat to the protective shade of the grotto (1.1–12) perhaps forecast relief in the political climate from the recent oppression. Nature itself seems to harmonize with Faunus' message. While the latter, with its predominantly political rather than pastoral outlook, harks back more to Vergil's *Aeneid* than to the *Eclogues*, as others have observed.¹⁴ Nevertheless, the prophecy does begin with a reference to the benefits that the countryside will gain from the new regime. For henceforth not only the urban population (*populi*, 1.37) but country dwellers too (*nemorum...coloni*, "inhabitants of the woodland," 36) will be united in happiness. The latter, in particular, will enjoy untroubled

¹³ Leach (1973) 57.

¹⁴ Leach (1973) 58–60.

guardianship (*seculo custode*, 38) of their herds in a land free of brigandage. For a golden age is now reborn, characterized by an untroubled peace (*secula cum pace*, 42). It is worth noting, however, that this is a benefit that our herdsmen seem already to possess. For, as we have remarked, Corydon will claim in *Eclogue* 4 that he and his fellows are able to recline, well fed, in untroubled shade (*secula...in umbra*, 37), thanks to the protection of Meliboeus. Otherwise, he insists, he would have been robbed of his lands, destitute and exiled on Spain's distant shores (38–47).

Elaborating on the theme of peace restored, Faunus' vision signals the return of justice to the world, as an era of blessedness follows the arrival of a youthful ruler, seemingly of Julian stock, and champion of the law court.¹⁵ While the combined imagery of golden age reborn, justice returned and a youthful divinity on earth is certainly Vergilian (see Verg. *Ecl.* 4.5–7), Calpurnian justice is not Vergil's *uirgo* ("maiden," 4.6) but, more specifically, *alma Themis* ("kindly Themis," Calp. *Ecl.* 1.44). She is an appropriate choice for the context, combining oracular powers as often noted by Ovid (e.g. *fatidicam Themin*, *Met.* 1.321), for example, with the legal authority embodied by the young prince in the ensuing reference to his victorious lawsuit.

Similarly, Calpurnius' description of the spirit of strife, stripped of her weapons and with hands bound behind her, is not the *furor impius* of *Aeneid* 1.294 but *impia Bellona* (Calp. *Ecl.* 1.46–7). As Wiseman has suggested, this "unique" picture of a demonic Bellona might have had particular resonance with a Neronian audience, given the strong Claudian associations with her Roman temple, and hence promoting, by contrast, the peaceful accession of Claudius' successor.¹⁶ No less Neronian in its parallels is Calpurnius' gruesome depiction of this goddess twisting her teeth madly into her own entrails (*in sua uesanos torquet uiscera morsus*, 1.48), even outdoing Lucan's vivid portrayal of the Roman people turning their victorious swords on their own guts (Luc. 1.3). The restoration of peace described in the following lines develops a contrast between past and present in terms of appearance versus reality. Thus the bright peace now at hand will be real and not merely a mask (*candida pax aderit; nec solum candida uultu*, Calp. *Ecl.* 1.54)

¹⁵ See also Horsfall (1997) 169 on the interpretation of *maternis causam qui uicit Iulis* ("who won the case for his mother's family, the Julii," 1.45).

¹⁶ Wiseman (1982) 58–9.

as it once was when, even though foreign foes had been subdued, discord still spread stealthily, with blood shed in secret. Clemency, no doubt imperial, has expelled every vice that once hid behind this facade (*simulatae pacis*, “a pretense of peace,” 58).

Once the senate was enchained and decimated, prey to the executioner; henceforth, there will be an era unaccustomed to the glint of swords. For a reign like that of Numa who taught the arts of peace will replace that of Romulus who delighted in slaughter (1.63–8). No longer will the consul purchase merely the sham of an office shaded in its authority (*adumbrati faciem mercatus honoris*, 69); instead, *melior deus* (“a better god,” 73) will restore the former tradition and appearance of the Forum (*moremque fori uultumque priorem*, 72).

Despite the apparently emphatic distinctions drawn in these contrasts, the reader might still feel rather unsettled by their wording. For Calpurnius gives *uultus* two contradictory meanings that blur his otherwise sharp definitions. Whereas in the first instance the word denotes the deceptiveness of appearances, namely a peace that is treacherously superficial, at the close it seemingly represents the return to a former reality. This apparent semantic shift in the usage of the word perhaps calls into question, whether intentionally or not, the actual nature of the restored face of politics hailed in the culmination of the prophecy. Indeed, far from ending on a clearly positive note, Faunus’ prophecy closes with a puzzling statement that Leach plausibly interprets as a warning.¹⁷ The living god will take onto his strong shoulders the massive burden of the Roman state (*Romanae pondera molis*, 1.84) so effortlessly that the world will feel no disturbance at the transference of power. In addition to the Vergilian echoes (*Aen.* 1.33; *Ecl.* 4.50–2), the passage recalls Ovid’s description of the Romans’ search for a new ruler (who turns out to be Numa) to succeed to the reign of Romulus (*quis tantae pondera molis / sustineat*, “who might bear the burden of so weighty a task,” *Met.* 15.1–2).¹⁸ Calpurnius adds cautiously, however, that Rome “should not consider her guardian gods deservedly extinguished—unless the rising (reign) shall have looked back to the ones that have set” (*nec prius ex meritis defunctos Roma penates / censeat, occasus nisi cum respexerit ortus*, 1.87–8). The implication seems to be that Rome will meet deserved catastrophe if its new regime (*ortus*) looks back (*respexerit*) to the old

¹⁷ Leach (1973) 63–4.

¹⁸ Cf. also Lucan’s portrayal of Nero holding the weight of the world (1.57–8).

(*occasus*) for example or precedent. Shortly before this passage Calpurnius had used rising and setting (*uel ortu / uel patet occasu*, “whether lying in east or west,” 75–6) to describe a world in joyful harmony, east and west united as a comet foretold the arrival of a prince of peace. Now, however, the words are used in opposition to each other in a metaphor demanding a complete division between the two.

While the combination of *ortus* and *occasus* is by no means uncommon elsewhere, its partnering here with *respexerit* perhaps recalls, above all, Ovid’s description of a frightened Phaethon looking alternately to west and east (*prospicit occasus, interdum respicit ortus*, *Met.* 2.190) as he struggles feebly with the reins of the sun’s chariot shortly before Jupiter destroys him with the lightning bolt. If so, the image adds an ominous note to an already disquieting possibility.

In any case, vocabulary and hence meaning seem to become increasingly uncertain toward the close of Faunus’ prophecy, as key words come back on themselves with altered signification. This is matched by, and perhaps explains to some extent, Corydon’s uneasy reaction to the panegyric. Ornytus’ response is unequivocal; he suggests that the song, given to them by one god, should immediately be put to music and relayed to another, that is to the ears of the new Augustus (*augustas...ad aures*, 1.94), hopefully by their protector Meliboeus. In contrast, Corydon admits to mixed feelings of joy and fear (*mixtus subit inter gaudia terror*, 1.90).¹⁹

The latter’s unease continues in the sequel, *Eclogue* 4, as Meliboeus comes across the young herdsman sitting in silence and wearing a grim expression (*quid tacitus, Corydon, uultuque subinde minaci*, 4.1). Even the setting strikes Meliboeus as alien, the noisy stream (*garrulus...umor*, 2) hardly conducive to poetic inspiration. For, unlike the melodious countryside of Vergil and Theocritus, the ideal environment for poetry in Calpurnius seems to be quiet, as at *Eclogue* 2.15–18 where rivers and winds fall silent, and the whole of nature is still, in anticipation of the poetry contest between Idas and Astacus (cf. Verg. *Ecl.* 1.53–8, 2.12–13, 5.62–4, 7.13; Theoc. *Id.* 1.1–3, 7–8, 106–7, 5.33–4, 45–9, 7.135–42). Indeed, it is the resurgent noise of nature at the close of *Eclogue* 2 that drowns out the herdsman’s song and puts an end to the contest (95–6). Likewise in the opening of *Eclogue* 4 it is nature that chatters noisily while Corydon sits in brooding silence. We might also

¹⁹ Cf. Davis (1987) 43 n. 50.

hear in Meliboeus' description of Corydon's demeanor an ironic echo of Damassipus' portrait of Horace who, despite enjoying the security and ease of the farm provided by Maecenas, forever wears an expression promising great verse (*atqui uultus erat multa et praeclara minantis*, *Sat.* 2.3.9) yet produces nothing.

In response Corydon reveals the reason for his silence. Echoing Amyntas' earlier impression that Faunus' prophecy, now Corydon's inspiration, had no ring of the cattle stall (*nihil armentale resultat*, *Calp. Ecl.* 1.29) he admits that he is embarking on what are for him novel themes that have no woodland sound (*non quae nemorale resulent*, 4.5). Rather, they must be fit to celebrate a golden age and its earthly god who rules the nations in peace. To Meliboeus' caution that even a country poet of superior ability can not simply transfer his pastoral techniques and motifs to praise of imperial divinities (4.9–11), Corydon replies that, though his song seem primitive to critical ears, his rusticity (*rusticitas*, 14) should still win approval for its piety if not for its art (13–15). Corydon's appraisal of his rustic quality, at least in the realm of poetry, is noticeably positive. He sees it not as a hindrance but rather as a mark of difference and possible benefit, its simplicity apparently enhancing its air of sincerity.²⁰

It is quite clear too that the approval he now seeks involves material reward. And this represents a fundamental change in his attitude, as Meliboeus notes. For Corydon had repeatedly warned his younger brother Amyntas to abandon poetry and the profitless Muses, returning instead to lowly country work. For how could poetry beat off starvation when only the echoing countryside ever repeated Corydon's songs (4.23–8)? Corydon readily admits to his previous devaluation of the Muses and in so doing acknowledges that he does measure poetry in essentially materialistic terms. For now, he says (30–1), it is a different time and a different god with an accompanying renewal of hope. The latter, he continues, has been fostered in no small part by Meliboeus himself: for it was he who saved the herdsmen from starvation and gave them the ease to enjoy their environment. Resorting, as we have noted, to Vergilian analogies, Corydon likens himself to Tityrus of Vergil's first eclogue in contrast to the Vergilian Meliboeus he would have become had not his patron saved him from exile to distant lands.

²⁰ Cf. Tzounakas (2006) 111–28 on *rusticitas* as a marker of literary style and genre.

And he emphasizes significantly that, prominent among his hardships on foreign shores, his music would have been profitless and the new divinity would never have been able to give an ear to his poetic vows (4.46–9).

In fact, Corydon makes it clear that he sees Vergil's Tityrus not as a fictional character but as representing Vergil himself, for he claims to possess the tuneful pipe that Tityrus once used in setting his pastorals to music (4.60–3). Corydon, that is, considers himself as potentially a second Vergil.²¹ And, no less clearly, he views the parallel not merely from an artistic perspective but, more tangibly, in terms of reward and patronage. Meliboeus recognizes the implications of the ambitious claim and warns that Corydon must therefore follow his predecessor in developing themes of a political nature rather than simple pastorals (73–7).

The amoebaeon song on which Corydon and Amyntas now embark, though inspired by Faunus' political prophecy, is selective in recapitulating the themes of its model. Our herdsmen ignore, for example, the detailed descriptions of the restoration of traditional forms of government, notably of senate and consulate, that had been at the heart of Faunus' vision. We can understand that the political map of the Forum would be of little concern to these humble country dwellers. Instead, in their *captatio benevolentiae*, they focus on the divinity of their new Caesar and on the harmony of city and country in the universal peace that the emperor is creating. In particular, Faunus' opening promise of the benefits to the countryside and its inhabitants becomes the central motif of the herdsmen's song. Thus, they imagine Caesar actually visiting their rustic retreat just as they picture Jupiter himself often enjoying pastoral song and relaxation in an idyllic woodland (4.87–96). They further visualize the whole of nature falling silent at Caesar's approach; indeed, such is his divine majesty that the earth, hitherto barren, bursts into sudden growth and flocks again become productive.

For country dwellers the provision of imperial peace brings an end to confiscation of treasure-trove (4.117–21) and a restoration of traditional rural festivals.²² Moreover, in this era of peace and plenty, local politics (seemingly an aspect of more concern than the Forum to our

²¹ Cf. Leach (1973) 69–70.

²² Cf. Horsfall (1997) 170 on possible Neronian legislation concerning treasure-trove.

singers) can flourish once again and rustic song is no longer drowned out by the military trumpet (122–31). And just as Faunus had signaled the return of Themis to the earth, so Corydon imagines the rustic deities having the confidence to come back to their traditional haunts without fear of encountering more bloodshed. In sum, we note that whereas Faunus had situated the new order in an urban, if not universal context, Corydon and Amyntas adapt his wide perspective to a much narrower focus, condensing the blessings of the coming era and its ruler to their desired effects on the rural world. The singers finish by transforming the prediction of the golden age to a prayer that Caesar will be granted a golden (and endless) thread of life though, whether he is Jupiter or some other god in human form, they beseech him to rule forever from earth rather than from the heavens.²³

Meliboeus is startled by the quality of the song. Whereas he had anticipated something primitively rustic the composition actually strikes him as worthy of Ovid (4.147–51). Surely more startling for Calpurnius' reader, however, and deliberately so, is Corydon's blunt request for payment.²⁴ How resonant his songs would be, he claims, if he had a homestead and pastures that he could call his own (*si quando montibus istis / dicar habere Larem*, 153–4). In bidding Meliboeus to carry the panegyric to the palace for presentation to the emperor, Corydon again equates himself with Tityrus, his pseudonym for Vergil. And Meliboeus will then be a second Maecenas, lifting the poet from rustic obscurity to become the voice of Roman, imperial epic (158–63). We might also recall, however, the analogy between Corydon and Horace from the opening lines of *Eclogue* 4, depicting two poets at odds with their surroundings and brooding silently over great themes. The irony, of course, that somewhat undercuts Corydon's bold comparisons with Augustan models, is provided by Horace himself in his self-portrait of an artist unable to write even in the comfort of the farm provided by his patron for that very purpose.

Moreover, Corydon's blatantly materialistic motives may invite a reassessment of the sentiments behind his encomium and account for Meliboeus' lack of response to the herdsman's petition. Whatever the reason for Meliboeus' unexplained inaction, in the final poem of the

²³ Cf. Sen. *Apoc.* 4.1.5–9 for the equation of golden age and a golden thread of life for the young Nero.

²⁴ Cf. Davis (1987) 47.

series it is Corydon, not his patron, who has made the journey to the city in hopes of imperial reward. The trip has left him lost between two worlds, at home neither in the city nor in the country. His native beech trees are now, to his eyes, nothing more than old wood; and what had been for Vergil the protective shade of their spreading foliage (*patulae...fagi*, Verg. *Ecl.* 1.1) Corydon has rejected for the spectacles of the broad arena (*patula...harena*, Calp. *Ecl.* 7.6). He also now dismisses as insignificant (Calp. *Ecl.* 7.13–15) the country festivals, such as the Palilia, and performances of pastoral song that he and his brother had celebrated in *Eclogue* 4 as the fruits of imperial peace. There is perhaps no small irony in Lycotas' opening remark in *Eclogue* 7 that for twenty nights now (*uicesima certe / nox*, 1–2) the woodlands and cattle have been eagerly anticipating Corydon's return. For how disappointingly different is the present outcome (even if on a more personal scale) from Faunus' prophecy of universal joy and harmony forecast by the comet seen for the twentieth night (*nox iam uicesima*, 1.77).

Yet in trying to describe the wonders he has seen, Corydon can use only pastoral terms, for this is the only world he knows. Thus, he pictures the imposing new amphitheatre in terms of the size and sweep of his home valley flanked by its wooded hills (*inter continuos curuatur concaua montes*, Calp. *Ecl.* 7.32). And again there is an ironic echo of Horace's description of his farm, surrounded by its circle of hills (*continui montes*, Hor. *Epist.* 1.16.5). Similarly, he can describe the exotic beasts he sees in the arena only by comparing them awkwardly to animals native to his environment (Calp. *Ecl.* 7.57–68). His mention of *genus omne ferarum* ("beasts of every kind," 7.57) recalls the setting of *Eclogue* 2 in which every kind of animal (*genus omne ferarum*, 2.10) had witnessed the poetry contest between the shepherd and the gardener, an almost Orphic picture of nature in harmony. Again, however, we might note a contrast between the two events, the earlier of which had ended positively with comradeships reinforced. At the close of *Eclogue* 7, however, Corydon is conscious only of his isolation and inferiority. While he had once considered his rustic qualities a potential advantage he is now aware only that his actual appearance in dingy peasant clothing (*rustica uestis*, 7.79) condemns him to nothing more than a distant view of the emperor. Even to the elderly spectator at the games, Corydon is a mere bumpkin and, just as humiliatingly, quite ignorant of gold (*nescius auri*, 41).

Certainly Corydon is humorously naive; he stands stupefied and slack-jawed (*defixus et ore patenti*, 7.37) at the sight of the amphitheatre. And

in his bluntly materialistic attitude to poetry he compares unfavorably with his fellow herdsmen. As Newlands suggests, Calpurnius views him with an urbane or ironic detachment.²⁵ There is much to be said for the argument that, overall, Calpurnius removes the attractive veneer of the pastoral world to show a harsher reality (though whether he also casts doubt over the relevance of the traditional pastoral mode is more open to question).²⁶ Just as in *Eclogue* 7 Corydon's optimism about his advancement in the new regime turns to disillusionment, so in *Eclogues* 5 and 6 the pastoral world becomes increasingly a setting for division and disharmony. Not only do singers find themselves ever more at odds with nature but with each other and with themselves. Discord replaces friendly rivalry and eventually puts an end to the song itself.

Yet Calpurnius' critical vision extends beyond his attitudes to the pastoral world and its inhabitants. His poetic corpus begins and ends with, indeed is bound together by, the message of new political leadership and the benefits of universal peace and harmony accompanying this revived golden age (1.42). Granted, Corydon has no abiding interest in the larger political message of the original prophecy, such as the end to civil war and the relationship between princeps and senate. Instead he selects Faunus' opening promise of rural security as the basis of his adaptation, building a version that has more relevance to himself and his rustic world. Yet this is no simple rustic narrative, for he still adheres closely to the sophisticated portrayal of the golden age that he knows from his Augustan predecessors. Just as the birth of the divine offspring in Vergil's fourth eclogue inspires the earth to give its bounty untilled and provide for burgeoning flocks (Verg. *Ecl.* 4.19–57), so Corydon's godly prince will revitalize the land, producing abundant harvests and flourishing herds. In combination, the narratives of Faunus and Corydon are also akin to the vision of the golden age found in Ovid. There (*Met.* 1.89–112), in a time of simplicity and moral purity, there is no knowledge of, or need for, laws and weaponry. And in perpetual springtime the earth spontaneously gives up its fruits.²⁷

Calpurnius' adaptations, however, are neither uncritical copies nor unambiguous in their purpose. In Faunus' panegyric, for example, gold is symbolic of morality reborn, the restoration of peace and the return

²⁵ Newlands (1987) 228.

²⁶ Cf. Davis (1987) 44–50 on the collection as a critique of the pastoral world and Newlands (1987) 228 for the poems as a "rejection of Vergilian pastoral."

²⁷ Cf. Wallace-Hadrill (1982) 19–36 on the golden age in Augustan poetry.

of Justice. It has the same metaphorical connotation in Corydon's sequel, the golden lifeline of the new prince promising an eternity of peace and plenty. In the final poem of the series, however, gold represents the material and, one might say, artificial and untouchable splendors of Rome as seen, for example, in the golden trees (*aurea...arbuta*, 7.72) spraying perfumed jets as they rise magically from the pits beneath the arena. Further, as we have noted, far from symbolizing hope and harmony, it ultimately confirms Corydon's isolation as a lowly outsider, in both his own eyes and those of the old man in the amphitheatre (7.41–2). Similarly Ovid had used the image of gold to contrast an idealized vision with a harsh reality. For his own day, he claims, truly is the golden age in that gold can buy political office and even love: *aurea sunt uere nunc saecula: plurimus auro / uenit honos, auro conciliatur amor* ("these really are golden times; for many an office is gained with gold and love, too, has a golden price," *Ars Am.* 2.277–8).

The gold that Corydon had hoped for is as far beyond his reach as is the emperor himself. Foremost among his anxieties about a life in exile had been the likelihood that his petitions would never have reached Caesar's ears. Unlike Vergil's Meliboeus, Corydon does not actually endure the pain of exile. Yet, for all practical purposes, he is as far removed from imperial notice (*conspeximus ipsum / longius*, "I glimpsed him from afar," Calp. *Ecl.* 7.82–3) as his distant prayers would have been from the world's edge (*longe sonantia uota / scilicet extremo non exaudiret in orbe*, "certainly he would never hear my far-echoing prayers at the ends of the earth," 4.48–9). Tityrus, on whom Corydon consciously models himself and whom he takes as a pseudonym for Vergil, had not only seen his young prince in Rome (*hic illum uidi iuuenem*, Verg. *Ecl.* 1.42) but had addressed him directly. In an ironic echo of the scene Corydon can claim only that he too would have seen the emperor at closer quarters (*uidissem propius mea numina*, Calp. *Ecl.* 7.80) if his pauper's rags had not precluded it. Does this divinity's face really combine the looks of Mars and Apollo? Corydon can only surmise that it does—unless the distant glimpse has deceived him (*nisi me uisus decepit*, 5.83). The sum of Corydon's experience is similar to that of Martial, who likewise contrasts the grandiose imperial expenditure on games and monuments with the emperor's godlike remoteness and the lack of financial support from the palace for would-be panegyrists (e.g., Mart. 5.19, 6.10.).²⁸

²⁸ Cf. also Garthwaite (1998b) 157–71.

Meliboeus remains a shadowy figure in Calpurnius' *Eclogues*. We do not know, for example, the circumstances that had enabled him to survive the previous tyranny, or the basis of his relationship with the new regime that grants him access to the presence of the emperor (4.158–9). Nor are we familiar with the nature of his own artistic abilities that might partially account for his role as protector and literary mentor of the rustic herdsmen (71–2). But we do know that, in contrast to the benefactor of Vergil's Tityrus, it is he, not the emperor, who is providing Corydon and his companions with the security to indulge their poetic talents (36–8). On the evidence of the final poem, this is the only form of patronage that the disillusioned Corydon can expect.

In his series of poems on the new age Calpurnius juxtaposes the universal with the particular. Alongside the prophecy of renewed harmony between *princeps* and senate, and an end to the civil wars that lately engulfed the world, the poet sets the more limited vision of a small group of countrymen and, in particular, the aspirations of one individual to share the benefits of the new dispensation. Whatever the potential merits of Faunus' sweeping prediction and the naiveté of Corydon's expectations, Calpurnius chooses to leave us with the image of the latter's disillusionment and sense of isolation. He leaves us, too, with a glimpse of a remote imperial figure (perhaps deliberately left anonymous throughout) quite at odds with the immediate presence so keenly felt in *Eclogues* 1 and 4. In these respects, far from reinforcing the grand vision of the golden age in the earlier political poems, the mood of the closing eclogue is more in keeping with that of *Eclogues* 5 and 6 with their portrayal of an increasingly fractious and fragmented pastoral world. The disintegration of Corydon's hopes is surely not simply an ironic commentary on his naïve and materialistic ambitions or on the value of the pastoral genre. It is a pessimistic addendum, embracing more than just the aspect of literary patronage, to the idealized predictions of a renewed Augustan golden age.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

OF DESPOTS, DIADEMS AND *DIADOCHOI*: JOSEPHUS AND FLAVIAN POLITICS

Steve Mason

ἀγῶνος δὲ ἐνδεήσειν οὐδέν· οὐ γὰρ τὴν σύγκλητον ἢ τὸν Ῥωμαίων δῆμον
ἀνέξεσθαι τῆς Οὐιτελλίου λαγνείας ἀντὶ τῆς Οὐεσπασιανοῦ σωφροσύνης,
οὐδ' ἀντὶ μὲν ἡγεμόνος ἀγαθοῦ τύραννον ὁμότατον, ἄπαιδα δὲ ἀντὶ πατ-
ρὸς αἰρήσεσθαι προστάτην μέγιστον γὰρ δὴ πρὸς ἀσφάλειαν εἰρήνης εἶναι
τὰς γνησίους τῶν βασιλέων διαδοχάς.

(Joseph. *Bj* 4.596)

But there will be no need of a competition, for neither the senate nor the Roman populace will tolerate the lust of Vitellius in place of the self-control of Vespasian; nor will they choose as patron a savage tyrant in place of a good governor, nor a childless man in place of a father. For the greatest security of peace consists in natural successors of the kings.

[Vespasian's legions, Judea, 69 CE]

In a previous essay I have argued that Titus Flavius Josephus, the only extant historian from Flavian Rome, used his *Antiquitates Judaicae* to comment on Roman governance, both directly and obliquely through the medium of Judean politics.¹ Published at the beginning of Domitian's "terror" (93/94 CE), his *magnum opus* promises to chart the vicissitudes of the Judean πολιτεία ("constitution," *Aj* 1.5, 10). In doing so, however, it speaks often about the odium of monarchy, which as everyone knows degenerates to tyranny (Pl. *Resp.* 8.565–9; Arist. *Pol.* 1279b, 1295a; Polyb. 6.4.8; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 7.55.3), while extolling senatorial aristocracy. Josephus' Moses cautions the Hebrews that ἀριστοκρατία μὲν οὖν κράτιστον καὶ ὁ κατ' αὐτὴν βίος, καὶ μὴ λάβῃ πόθος ὑμᾶς ἄλλης πολιτείας ("aristocracy, and the life associated with it, is the noblest. So do not let the desire for any other constitution snare you," *Aj* 4.223). When the people demand a king because of the bad behavior of the prophet Samuel's sons, Josephus uses the lads to illustrate the rule that the character of a child is often at variance with that of the parents (6.33–4)—the case *against* hereditary succession, and so kingship. He claims that Samuel became profoundly upset at the demand for a king,

¹ Mason (2003) 559–89.

...διὰ τὴν σύμφυτον δικαιοσύνην καὶ τὸ πρὸς τοὺς βασιλέας μῖσος· ἥτις γὰρ δεινῶς τῆς ἀριστοκρατίας ὡς θείας καὶ μακαρίους ποιούσης τοὺς χρωμένους αὐτῇ τῇ πολιτείᾳ.

(Joseph. *AJ* 6.36)

...because of his innate justice and his hatred of kings, for he had enormous affection for aristocracy, as divine and rendering happy those who use this constitution.

Kings tyrannically enslave their people and expropriate their possessions (*AJ* 6.40–1), and so the constitution provides for an aristocratic *γερουσία* (“senate”) led by the high priest. Monarchy was an aberration.

Such passages plainly have an application beyond Judean affairs. Josephus’ extended treatment of the heir-obsessed Herod, in *Antiquitates Judaicae* 14 to 17, yields in books 18 and 19 to a detailed exploration of the Roman crises that attended the deaths of Tiberius and Gaius Caligula.² He dwells on Tiberius’ problem finding an heir (*AJ* 18.205–23) and hosts an internal Roman debate on the best form of government (19.158–211). Like Moses and Samuel, the consul Gnaeus Sentius Saturninus opines that collegial senatorial governance *πολιτειῶν ἐχεγγνώταται πρὸς τε τὸ παρὸν εὖνουν καὶ τὸ αὐθις ἀνεπιβούλευτον καὶ τὸ δόξαν οἰκείαν τῷ ὀρθουμένῳ τῆς πόλεως* (“of all constitutions best guarantees both good will in the present and freedom from intrigue in the future, as well as the reputation attached to the right ordering of the city,” 19.178). Sentius contrasts favorably the assassins of Gaius with Julius Caesar’s murderers (19.184)³ and tars *all* the *principes* as tyrants (19.173–4). Josephus editorially confirms the link between principate and tyranny: *οἷτοι γὰρ πρότερον ἢ τυραννηθῆναι τὴν πόλιν κύριοι τῶν στρατιωτικῶν ἦσαν* (“for before the city had been *subjected to tyrants*, it was they [the senators] who had been masters of the military,” 19.187). The senators contemplate a putsch to recover their historic *libertas* (“freedom”), but end up with Claudius as *princeps*, in a compromise with the army brokered by a Judean king (19.212–73). Evidently, Josephus’ treatment of governance in the *Antiquitates Judaicae* was attuned to the interests of an elite Roman audience.

The present chapter has a narrower focus, namely the story of King Herod’s succession crisis (4 BCE) in Josephus’ earliest known work, the *Bellum Judaicum*. Although this work is commonly dismissed as Flavian

² Mason (2003) 559–89.

³ On the dangers of perceived support for Brutus and Cassius: Tac. *Ann.* 4.34–5, 4.76, 16.7, 22; Plin. *Ep.* 1.17.3; MacMullen (1966) 1–45; Salles (1992) 70–5.

propaganda,⁴ I shall ask whether already here Josephus does not offer material for reflection in the vein of “safe criticism”⁵ on the problem of monarchical succession. This issue was of course fundamental for the Julio-Claudians;⁶ it surfaced immediately in the civil war of 68–9 with Galba⁷ and played a prominent role in the rise of the Flavians. Hasmonean and Herodian succession woes occupy a remarkable amount of space in a work ostensibly devoted to the Judean war of 66–73. In book 1, the Hasmonean dynasty reaches its apogee with John Hyrcanus (governed 135–104 BCE), who is allowed through prophecy to see that his dynasty will soon collapse under his sons Aristobulus and Alexander Janneus (BJ 69). The former immediately transforms the rule into a monarchy and ominously assumes the diadem. His brief reign (104 BCE) becomes a tyranny marred by matricide and fratricide (70–1). In the latter half of the Hasmonean story, Josephus treats his brother Alexander’s long tyranny (104–76 BCE)—he kills more than 50,000 of his own people (91)—and the succession struggle between Alexander’s two sons, which will fatefully invite Roman intervention in 63 BCE (117–54). Then King Herod (ruled 37–4 BCE) plans his succession with seven different wills, not least because in fits of pique he eliminates heirs.⁸ In *Bellum Judaicum* 2, following the king’s death, Augustus’ verdict about Herod’s successor displaces almost everything else from the narrative of the decade 4 BCE to 6 CE (1–118). That passage is our focus. It is not enough to explain such a narrative preoccupation by supposing that Josephus merely records what happened or by resort to sources that he thoughtlessly compiled. My task is to interpret this fascinating passage in relation to the work as a whole and in light of Josephus’ Roman context.

⁴ E.g., Laqueur (1920) 126–7; Thackeray (1929) 27–8; Smith (1956) 67–81; Shutt (1961) 26; Yavetz (1975) 421; Cohen (1979) 86, 237–41; Cohen (1982) 366; Attridge (1984) 192–227; Jones (1984) 78; Hengel (1989) 7–10; S. Schwartz (1990) 10; Levick (1999) 12, 31.

⁵ See Ahl (1984a) 174–208.

⁶ E.g., Gagé (1931) 11–41; Syme (1939) 415–39; Parsi (1963) 2–12; Mellado Rivera (2003).

⁷ E.g., Wellesley (1989) 11, 17–9.

⁸ Richardson (1996) 33–51.

Civil Strife and Tyrants—Judean and Roman

Josephus claims to have written the *Bellum Judaicum* because, in the immediate wake of the conflict, reporting by others was hopelessly inaccurate and biased (*Bj* 1.1–3, 6–8). Such authors always καταβάλλουσιν (“bully”) and ταπεινοῦσιν (“diminish”) the Judeans (1.7). A proud priest-aristocrat and former general in the northern theater facing the Roman advance, he will mount a sustained effort to correct this bias. While allowing due credit to the victors, he will reveal how much difficulty they faced from his people (1.8). He will make his audience aware of the Judeans’ real character, their long period of suffering under unworthy governors, and their excellent leadership; in battle, their tenacity, courage, pride, and contempt for death (e.g., 5.306, 315–6; 6.11–7, 285). He will explain that Jerusalem fell and its temple was destroyed not because of Roman power or Titus’ design, as commonly supposed, but because certain τύραννοι (“tyrants”) among the Judeans generated a στάσις (“civil conflict”) that hijacked the war from the aristocrats, whom they eventually murdered (1.10; 4.305–65). The tyrants fought incompetently and from the wrong motives; they disregarded the lives of their own people, whose freedom was their ostensible goal (1.10, 27). Their gross impiety led the Judean God to abandon and purge his temple (5.402, 444; 6.300).

There is every reason to believe Josephus’ account of his situation and motives. Decades later, another native Aramaic-speaker would complain in similar terms about the bias and ignorance of historians purporting to describe the Parthian war of Lucius Verus (*Lucian Hist.* 2, 7, 13, 15, 17, 24, 29). All the known evidence bearing on Roman conditions in the 70s and 80s⁹ abundantly confirms that the Judean image suffered badly in consequence of the endless Flavian celebrations. In response, Josephus’ narrative really does attempt a balanced portrait, consistently recognizing both Judean and Roman acts of valor.

The *Grundkonzept* of Judean στάσις and tyranny is programmatically linked by Josephus with Roman parallels. As he says retrospectively in the *Antiquitates Judaicae* (1.7), the work has a symmetrical arrangement. Analysis reveals an overarching concentric plan, moving towards and then away from the central panel concerning the murder of the esteemed aristocrats Ananus and Jesus, who had been virtuously man-

⁹ See especially Millar (2005) 101–28.

aging the conflict with the welfare of the people uppermost in mind (*Bḡ* 4.305–65). Their deaths open the gates to an unbridled tyranny and *στάσις* (362, 366), resulting in the ultimate catastrophe. Within this symmetrical plan, Josephus connects Roman civil war (*στάσις*, *πόλεμος ἐμφύλιος*) and *τύραννοι*, pre-Augustan and pre-Flavian, with the two halves of his Judean story.¹⁰ Of course, these phenomena were well-known threats facing every state (cf., e.g., Plut. *Mor.* 799b–804c, 814f–816a). Yet Josephus does not (like Plutarch or Dio) treat them as a generic, much less a Greek, problem: he matches up only and continually the Judean and Roman situations.

In the prologue (*Bḡ* 1.4) he identifies the *κίνημα* (“commotion”) when the Judean war erupted as a period in which Roman affairs also *ἐνόςαι* (“were becoming diseased”—a verb commonly applied with its Latin equivalents to the blight of civil strife: Pl. *Resp.* 5.470c, *Soph.* 228a; Sall. *Cat.* 36.5, *Hist.* 2.77; Tac. *Ann.* 1.43.4, *Hist.* 1.26.1).¹¹ The same prospectus mentions the *μεταβολαί* (“upheavals”) in Rome at the time of the Judean war (*Bḡ* 1.23). Josephus implies that the civil war that afflicted the Judeans and led to Roman intervention was an experience quite familiar to the Romans and not—as Nicolaus of Damascus and others would claim (2.92)—a perverse Judean trait.

That such civil wars have always characterized great foreign powers is a point made repeatedly, even under the glorious period of native Hasmonean rule (*Bḡ* 1.31–168). So the opening sentence of the narrative:

Στάσεως τοῖς δυνατοῖς Ἰουδαίων ἐμπεσούσης καθ’ ὃν καιρὸν Ἀντίοχος ὁ κληθεὶς Ἐπιφανὴς διεφέρετο περὶ ὅλης Συρίας πρὸς Πτολεμαῖον τὸν ἕκτον, ἡ φιλοτιμία δ’ ἦν αὐτοῖς περὶ δυναστείας ἐκάστου τῶν ἐν ἀξιώματι μὴ φέροντος τοῖς ὁμοίοις ὑποτετάχθαι...

(Joseph. *Bḡ* 1.31)

Civil strife broke out among the leaders of the Judeans at the very time when Antiochus surnamed Epiphanes had a quarrel with Ptolemy VI concerning all of Syria: the rivalry among them was about supreme power, since each person of status could not bear to be subjected to his peers...

Local contenders for power had larger political affiliations, such that for example the defeat of Ptolemy VI required the withdrawal of his Judean

¹⁰ E.g., Rajak (1983) 91–4; Feldman (1998) 140–8; Mader (2000) 55–103; cf. Price (2001) on the Thucydidean background.

¹¹ Cf. Keitel (1984) 320, n. 32.

client, the high priest Onias, to Egypt.¹² After Antiochus IV launched his notorious persecution against the Judeans (167 BCE), the Hasmonean rebels were able to carve out their state in large part by taking advantage of dynastic rivalries within Seleucid circles (1.49, 50–1).

When the Romans came on the scene, they too imposed their power struggles on the Judeans. In the bulk of book 1, which is devoted to the exploits of Herod's father Antipater and then the great king himself, the Roman civil wars and their famous protagonists furnish the context. Antipater and Herod pursue an astonishingly deft program of managing relations: with Pompey (127–31); with Crassus, who plundered 2,000 talents from the Jerusalem temple for his Parthian campaign and promptly perished in the effort (179); with Pompey's enemy Julius Caesar (183); with Caesar's assassin Cassius (218–20); with Caesar's avenger and victor at Philippi, Marc Antony (242); and finally with Antony's mortal enemy Octavian-Augustus, who would reportedly become Herod's closest friend (386, 400). Upon Caesar's assassination, Josephus turns the spotlight directly on the problem of Roman governance (216–9): πόλεμος ἐμφύλιος (“civil war”), διαστασιάζω (“fomenting factionalism”), and κίνημα (“commotion”) broke out at the center of the world. All this conspires to highlight the instability of Roman government through a long period: no matter how solidly established he appeared to be, even the most powerful man faced sudden removal by a stronger force.

Josephus drives this point home in the case of Antony and Octavian. Antony was at the height of his powers when he persuaded the senate to appoint Herod King of Judea (1.282–5); in return, Herod was generous with loyalty and military support (320). Though supremely powerful in the East, Antony was himself a slave to his passion for the bloodthirsty Egyptian Cleopatra (359–60, 390; cf. 243). Still, Herod was his friend and he would have rushed to support him even at Actium if he could have done so (388). Josephus therefore makes vivid the anxiety felt by Herod after Actium, and his great relief when Octavian confirmed him as king—bestowing on him once again the diadem that he had respectfully removed (387, 390, 393). The two become best friends (400). Paradoxically, the Idumean-Judean dynasty of Antipater

¹² In fact (cf. *AJ* 13.65–8), this Onias (III) died in the conflict and Onias IV founded the temple at Leontopolis.

and Herod proves more stable than the Roman regime to which it is subject during the decades following Pompey.

After book 1, the story of the *Bellum Judaicum* continues to connect with Roman struggles. Book 2 pays particular attention to the more grotesque products of the Julio-Claudian line—from an aristocratic perspective, at least: Gaius Caligula and Nero, whose memories were subject to erasure in Rome. In both cases Josephus emphasizes issues of succession at their elevation. Gaius is introduced as the son of Germanicus (*BJ* 2.178)—enough of a reference to evoke both the scandalous death of that adored young man (as it was widely rumored) from dynastic causes (*Tac. Ann.* 2.82; *Suet. Tib.* 52.3) and Gaius' well-known fall from his great father's glory. Of Nero, Josephus notes with all malice that Claudius left him as successor even though the *princeps* had a natural son, Britannicus, and two daughters; he had adopted Nero *ταῖς Ἀγριππίνης τῆς γυναικὸς ἀπάταις* ("because of his wife Agrippina's trickery," *BJ* 2.249). Gaius and Nero become in Josephus' narrative the primary agents of the breakdown in Judean-Roman relations (below). Josephus coins a phrase for both: ἐξύβρισεν εἰς τὴν τύχην ("they abused fortune," 184, 250). Even the accession of the mild Claudius, between these two, was marked by a brief civil war in Rome: the impotent senate at first declared war on him, determined either to re-establish ἀριστοκρατία ("the aristocracy") of old, or to select by vote someone worthy of *imperium*, 205).

From book 4 onwards, the backdrop changes to the recent civil war in Rome, from the revolt of Vindex (4.440) through the months of turmoil following Nero's suicide (491–502, 545–9). The relevance of this parallel story becomes clear at 4.545. While describing the violent conflict in Jerusalem between the tyrants Simon bar Gioras and John of Gischala, Josephus observes: Οὐ μόνον δὲ κατὰ τὴν Ἰουδαίαν στάσις ἦν καὶ πόλεμος ἐμφύλιος, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῆς Ἰταλίας ("not only in Judea were there civil war and sedition, however, but also across Italy," 545–6)—and he briefly covers the struggles of Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, adverting to audience knowledge for the details (546–9). Later he writes, κατὰ δὲ τὸν αὐτὸν καιρὸν περιέσχε καὶ τὴν Ῥώμην πάθη χαλεπά ("at about the same time [as the Jerusalem tyrants were polluting Jerusalem], heavy sufferings enveloped Rome," 585). The Judean-Roman comparison is strengthened by Josephus' characterization of Vitellius: he filled every house in Rome with armed men, who pillaged at will and slaughtered those who obstructed them (4.586–7). Vitellius thus behaves just like the despots of Jerusalem, described immediately before this section.

The Roman, like his Judean counterparts (566, 569), was a τύραννος ὀμότατος (“savage tyrant,” 596)—the same phrase used of Herod and Archelaus by the Judean delegates to Augustus (2.84, 88; see below).

Again, several paragraphs near the end of book 4 provide a graphic, day-by-day portrait of the end to the civil war in Rome (630–55), which comes immediately before Titus is sent to quell the civil war in Jerusalem (656–63). For Titus understands as does Josephus that the problem in Jerusalem is a *civil war* (5.1–3) and not a matter of the Judean people’s opposing Rome, as the Flavian portrait would have it. Thus, we have two great nations racked by civil discord, with would-be tyrants pursuing their personal power no matter what the cost to the commonwealth.

The end of the στάσις theme in the *Bellum Judaicum* is also the end of the main story. This occurs with the joint triumph of Vespasian and Titus, concerning which Josephus comments

ταύτην γὰρ τὴν ἡμέραν ἡ Ῥωμαίων πόλις ἐώρταζεν ἐπινίκιον μὲν τῆς κατὰ τῶν πολεμίων στρατείας, πέρας δὲ τῶν ἐμφυλίων κακῶν, ἀρχὴν δὲ τῶν ὑπὲρ τῆς εὐδαιμονίας ἐλπίδων.

(Joseph. *BJ* 7.157)

For on this day the city of the Romans celebrated *both* victory in the campaign against her enemies [the Judeans] *and* the end of civil disasters [among the Romans]—and thus the beginning of hopes for prosperity.

The next paragraph, collapsing some four years, covers the dedication of the Temple of Peace in Rome (158–62). Vespasian’s triumph over internal chaos, with his sons as ostensible insurance against further bloody contests, coincides with Vespasian’s and Titus’ decisive victory over foreign enemies. This is the mirror image of the Judean situation: the end of her civil war and tyranny means the cessation of conflict with Rome.

Josephus continually reverts to affairs in Rome, then, partly in order to make the Judean conflict intelligible, less alien. Every statesman understands the perennial threat of στάσις and *sedition*, and the Romans have suffered more than their share. Judeans can hardly be singled out for contempt because the disease has affected their society.

Native Aristocracy, Foreign Hegemony, and “Freedom”

To understand Josephus’ handling of the Herodian succession and the tyranny of Archelaus, one must bear in mind the general thrust of his

approach to Judean governance in the *Bellum Judaicum*. The ongoing interplay between respectable native δυνάτοί-aristocrats, kings and their heirs, and tyrants who seek personal power under the slogan of ἐλευθερία (“freedom,” “independence”) makes this work among other things a meditation on the meaning of freedom.¹³ In contexts of rebellion from Rome, the language of freedom and slavery came easily to expression, as Tacitus’ account of the nearly contemporary revolt under Civilis in 69, for example, indicates (*Hist.* 4.17, 64; *Ann.* 3.45, 4.24, 4.46, 14.31). Paradoxically (given our topic), Civilis allows that slavery to Rome may be good enough for Syria, Asia Minor, and the East, accustomed to kings (*Tac. Hist.* 4.17), but not for Germans! One reason for Josephus’ inclusion of the Hasmonean history in his account of the Judean-Roman war surely has to do with this theme. The movement towards rebellion in the war just completed had drawn inspiration from the presumed Hasmonean example of ἐλευθερία, seen as independence from foreign rule.¹⁴ Josephus reinterprets that charter history so as to qualify in crucial ways what freedom can plausibly mean.

In the spirit of his contemporary Plutarch, who advised statesmen to offer the populace a version of the nation’s past cleansed of inappropriately inspiring military escapades (*Mor.* 814c, 824d), the Hasmonean scion Josephus (*Vit.* 1) retells the story of the greatest generation in a way that precludes any naive equation of self-rule with absolute independence. In his account the hero Judah Maccabee, at the very inception of his revolt (*Bj* 1.38)—contrast 1 Maccabees (8:1–32)—was anxious to make a treaty with Rome, the new major power from the west. In the main speech that he writes for his own character later in the work, Josephus takes this theme back to the Persian period. Bonding with his audience by mentioning the dark ἐν Βαβυλῶνι δουλεία (“slavery in Babylon”), he surprisingly declares that ὁ λαὸς...οὐ πρότερον εἰς ἐλευθερίαν ἀνεχαίτισεν (“the people only raised its head toward liberty”) under the guidance of another foreign ruler, the Persian Cyrus: προυπέμφθησαν γοῦν ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ, καὶ πάλιν τὸν αὐτῶν σύμμαχον ἐνεωκόρουν (“Yes indeed! *It was through him* that they were sent out [to Judea] and once again worshiped their [divine] ally in a temple,” *Bj* 5.389). Further on Josephus invokes the Romans

¹³ Schwartz (2002) 65–82 offers insight on the theme in the service of a source-critical treatment.

¹⁴ See Farmer (1957) 147–55; Hengel (1989) 149–55, 171–3 (history of scholarship), 377.

as Judea's current foreign protectors against tyrants (5.396). Thus, the nation's most glorious days of self-rule *never* amounted to absolute independence; the Hasmoneans, understanding statesmanship like all proper statesmen, carved out a niche for the national dignity in the framework of alliances with world powers.

Book 2 of the *Bellum Judaicum* is shot through with the language of freedom and slavery. Josephus describes deceivers and bandits who in the mid-50s:

... συναχθέντες πολλοὺς εἰς ἀπόστασιν ἐνήγον καὶ πρὸς ἐλευθερίαν παρεκρότουν θάνατον ἐπιτιμώντες τοῖς πειθαρχοῦσιν τῇ Ῥωμαίων ἡγεμονίᾳ καὶ πρὸς βίαν ἀφαιρήσεσθαι λέγοντες τοὺς ἐκουσίως δουλεύειν προαιρουμένους.

(Joseph. *BJ* 2.264)

...were inciting many to defection and cajoling them toward "freedom," threatening death to those who submitted to the *imperium* of the Romans and saying that they would forcibly eliminate those who willingly chose slavery.

The marvelous contradiction in the tyrants' refusal to accept the free choice of others—for a putative "slavery"—and their willingness to impose "freedom" by force is a prominent theme in the *Bellum Judaicum* (cf. 2.443).

These notices anticipate a series of exchanges in the *Bellum Judaicum*'s pivotal section, the middle of book 4. There the former high priest Ananus is struggling to wrest control of Jerusalem from the Zealots. In a speech that repeatedly laments the role of tyrants in city, he remarks:

ἀλλ' ὁ νῦν πρὸς Ῥωμαίους πόλεμος, ἐὼ διελέγχειν πότερον λυσιτελὲς ὢν καὶ σύμφορος ἢ τοῦναντίον, τίνα δ' οὖν ἔχει πρόφασιν; οὐ τὴν ἐλευθερίαν; εἴτα τοὺς τῆς οἰκουμένης δεσπότας μὴ φέροντες τῶν ὁμοφύλων τυράννων ἀνεξόμεθα;

(Joseph. *BJ* 4.177–8)

Yet there is now a war against Rome—I leave aside the question, which it is: profitable and advantageous or the opposite—but what is its pretext? Is it not 'freedom'? If, then, we are not tolerating even the masters of the inhabited earth, are we going to put up with tyrants who are mere compatriots?

The rhetoric becomes complicated when the Idumeans arrive outside the city, summoned by the Zealots to help secure the "freedom" of the city over against Ananus and the aristocrats (4.228, 245–6), who try to refuse them entry. Not grasping the real situation inside the city (known to the literary audience), the Idumean leader launches into an

attack on Ananus and his group for trying to keep out those who are committed only to freedom (273, 275), while they themselves exercise tyranny over the populace within—and yet pretend that they are victims of tyranny. The Idumean asks in exasperation, τίς ἂν ἐνέγκαι τὴν εἰρωνείαν τῶν λόγων; (“who can tolerate such irony of language?”, 279). Irony indeed!

Near the end of the work, completing the symmetry, Josephus makes the same point in nearly the same words about the σικάριοι (“assassins”) of Masada:

...συνέστησαν ἐπὶ τοὺς ὑπακούειν Ῥωμαίων θέλοντας καὶ πάντα τρόπον ὡς πολεμίοις προσεφέροντο, τὰς μὲν κτήσεις ἀρπάζοντες καὶ περιελαύνοντες, ταῖς δ' οἰκήκεσιν αὐτῶν πῦρ ἐνιέντες· οὐδὲν γὰρ ἄλλοφύλων αὐτοὺς ἔφασκον διαφέρειν οὕτως ἀγεννῶς τὴν περιμάχητον Ἰουδαίοις ἐλευθερίαν προεμένους καὶ δουλείαν αἰρεῖσθαι τὴν ὑπὸ Ῥωμαίοις ἀνωμολογηκότας.

(Joseph. *Bj* 7.254–6)

...they banded together against those who wished to submit to Rome and in every way regarded them as enemies: seizing their goods, rounding up their cattle, and setting fire to their homes; for, they asserted, they were in no way different from foreigners, who so ignobly forfeited the Judeans' hard-won freedom and openly admitted that they chose slavery under the Romans.

The tyrants compel their compatriots to embrace their particular vision of freedom.¹⁵

Without the same ironic tinge, the *Bellum Judaicum*'s three great speeches invest heavily in the freedom-slavery dialectic. The speeches of King Agrippa II and Josephus make the cold political point that Judea has indeed lost its freedom—in the rebels' sense of independence—long ago. But all the other great nations of the Roman world, which enjoy far superior resources for mounting resistance and sustaining independence, have capitulated also. Rebellion now is foolish (2.348–9, 355–6, 361, 373–6; 5.365–6, 389, 396). The speech of Eleazar son of Yair at Masada aptly closes out the freedom-slavery theme by calling for his comrades, in Stoic fashion, to take their own lives as the ultimate act of freedom, rather than face slavery under the Romans (7.335, 386; cf. 3.366–8). The moral is clear: no matter how enticing the prospect

¹⁵ Similarly, in his famous speech at Iotapata, Josephus' character ridicules his compatriots' willingness to compel mass suicide as an act of “freedom” to prevent slavery (3.366–8).

of radical freedom may appear, as a political program it is literally a dead end.

Like his contemporaries,¹⁶ Josephus has frequent recourse to the principle that rule by an outside power, now Rome, offers the best protection against native tyrants and internal civil strife. This principle was exemplified by the Roman general Titus Flamininus, “liberator of Greece,” a figure important for both Josephus’ model Polybius (18.46.14) and his contemporary Plutarch: ἀλλόφυλοι δ’ ἄνδρες . . . τοῖς μεγίστοις κινδύνοις καὶ πόνοις ἐξελόμενοι τὴν Ἑλλάδα δεσποτῶν χαλεπῶν καὶ τυράννων ἐλευθεροῦσι (“foreign men . . . have through the greatest dangers and labors rescued Greece, setting her free from harsh despots and tyrants,” *Flam.* 11.7; cf. *Comp. Phil. Flam.* 1.2). Similarly Josephus often remarks that the Romans, though ἀλλόφυλοι (“foreigners”), show more concern about the Judeans’ welfare than do the home-grown tyrants, whose personal ambition blinds them to the suffering they cause (*Bῆ* 1.27; 4.397; 5.18–9, 363; 6.102). This need not be read as Flavian or even Roman propaganda, for it is aristocratic political wisdom: the best hope for freedom—from the disease of domestic political rivalry—lay in what others might naively characterize as slavery (to the Romans).

With these issues in mind we may turn to the Herodian succession story in *Bellum Judaicum* 2, which intermingles all of these issues: monarchy, tyranny, succession, and political freedom. The presumptive heir Archelaus (1.667–70), aged 19, must undertake the long journey to Rome, to hear the decision of the world ruler Augustus (2.1–2). Two delegations from Judea also arrive in the capital, however, to challenge his claim. The first comprises other members of the Herodian family, who already hate the young man. Josephus claims that they were προηγουμένως ἕκαστος αὐτονομίας ἐπεθύμει στρατηγῷ Ῥωμαίων διοικουμένης, εἰ δ’ τοῦτο διαμαρτάνοι, βασιλεύειν Ἀντίπαν ἤθελεν (“each longing for self-government, preferably, supervised by a Roman commander; but should this fail, they wanted Antipas [Archelaus’ 17-year-old brother] to be king,” 22). The apparent paradox of self-government under a Roman commander is clarified by a later delegation of Judean elders who, with the approval of the Syrian governor Quinctilius Varus and the aid of 8,000 Judeans residing in Rome, make

¹⁶ For Polybius: Eckstein (1995) 194–236; for the Second Sophistic: Oliver (1953) 874 on Aristides; Swain (1996) 145–83 in general; Salmeri (2000) 53–92 on Dio Chrysostom.

a concerted bid *περὶ τῆς τοῦ ἔθνους αὐτονομίας* (“for the self-government of the nation,” 80):

δεῖσθαι δὲ Ῥωμαίων ἐλεῆσαι τὰ τε τῆς Ἰουδαίας λείψανα καὶ μὴ τὸ περισσὸν αὐτῆς ὑπορρίψαι τοῖς ὡμῶς σπαράττουσιν, συνάψαντας δὲ τῇ Συρίᾳ τὴν χώραν αὐτῶν διοικεῖν ἐπ’ ἰδίους ἡγεμόσιν· ἐπιδείξεσθαι γάρ, ὥς οἱ νῦν στασιώδεις διαβαλλόμενοι καὶ πολεμικοὶ φέρειν οἴδασιν μετρίους ἡγεμόνας.

(Joseph. *Bj* 2.90–1)

They begged the Romans to have mercy on the remains of Judea and not to toss away what was left of it to those who were savagely mauling it, but after joining their region to Syria to administer it by means of their own [Roman] governors. For this would demonstrate that those now being maligned as insurgent and bellicose know how to tolerate mild governors.

The context (84–90) shows that those guilty of savagely mauling the nation include at least the tyrant-monarch Archelaus and his father King Herod. The phrase might also encompass others who have been vying for the diadem in Archelaus’ absence (55–79; further below). However that may be, the delegates’ plea is clear: they wish to be incorporated into the province of Syria, with leave to follow their own laws under a native aristocracy. Anticipating the aristocratic leaders during the war against Rome, they understand freedom primarily as liberation from local despots, and consider aristocratic self-government best achieved under Roman rule.

The delegates’ appeal to be freed from local monarchic pretenders is highly significant for the narrative as a whole. First, it recalls a turning point in book 1, when the Pompeian Gabinius reorganized the government of Judea (*c.* 57 BCE) along just such lines, on his authority as proconsul of Syria. Denying the last Hasmonean rivals their royal ambitions, Gabinius *καθίστατο τὴν ἄλλην πολιτείαν ἐπὶ προστασίᾳ τῶν ἀρίστων* (“established another constitution, under the primacy [or patronage] of the *aristoi*,” 169). Josephus comments, *ἀσμένως δὲ τῆς ἐξ ἑνὸς ἐπικρατείας ἐλευθερωθέντες τὸ λοιπὸν ἀριστοκρατία διφοκῶντο* (“[The Judeans] were gladly freed from domination by one person and were governed in the sequel by an aristocracy,” 70). The embassy before Augustus, then, is pleading to return to this model after the interruption by Herod, and to prevent the continuation of monarchical experiments with the successor Archelaus.

It is telling that Josephus’ elders assume the moderate character of Syrian governors: they express no desire for Judea to be constituted a

province with its own governor. The governorship of Syria, with its legions, resources, and strategic importance in relation to Armenia and Parthia, was a great prize and a mark of honor for the highest-ranking senators. In the ensuing narrative, set under the principate, Josephus will describe successive *legati Augusti pro praetore* with obvious respect: P. Quinctilius Varus (2.16–7, 75–7), Publius Petronius (192–203), Ummidius Quadratus (239–44), and Cestius Gallus (280–1). They are men of status and aristocratic character.

In sharp contrast are both the Roman monarchs who loom large in the decades leading up to the war, and the equestrian “procurators” they send out to Judea. As we have seen, Josephus features the disgraced *principes* Gaius and Nero. He dilates on their heinous characters and behavior in relation to Judea—as in Rome. Gaius cut off the nobility of his own land, and extended the impiety to Judea (2.184), which was rescued only by the heroic statesmanship of Petronius, the Syrian legate (192–203). Nero murdered family members, and attacked the nobility (250); he also entrusted the Roman state to the most reprobate freedmen, Nymphidius and Tigellinus (4.491–5). And the men the emperors sent to govern Judea were from the bottom of the barrel. Josephus makes a point of this at his mention of the first (in 6 CE): Coponius, ἐπίτροπος τῆς ἱππικῆς . . . τάξεως . . . μέχρι τοῦ κτείνειν . . . ἑξουσίαν (“a procurator of the equestrian order [came with] authority that extended to killing,” 2.117)—a combination of low status and power that proves disastrous under later incumbents (169, 223, 247: “Felix, the brother of Pallas” sent by Claudius), especially some of Nero’s agents (272, 277). Thus, the Judean delegates’ hope for native aristocracy under a moderate senator in Syria, proposed to Augustus, will come to nothing.

This is conspicuous because in the *Antiquitates Judaicae* parallel (17.355, 18.1–2) Judea is in fact incorporated into Syria, not made a separate province as in *Bellum Judaicum*, and there are good reasons to think that this was the historical arrangement of 6 CE.¹⁷ Before Claudius, further, the agent in charge of Judean affairs under the Syrian legate was a *praefectus* and not a *procurator*.¹⁸ In the *Bellum Judaicum* Josephus

¹⁷ So Cotton (1999) 77–8 n. 14. These arguments have been developed from literary evidence in Mason (2008).

¹⁸ Sherwin-White (1978) 6; Schürer (1979–1987) 1.358–60; Brunt (1990) 163–87. This was strikingly confirmed for the case of Pontius Pilatus (19–37 CE) by an inscription from Caesarea Maritima published in 1961, which reads in part [Pon]tius Pilatus [Praef]ectus Iuda[ea]e (“Pontius Pilatus, Prefect of Judaea”). See Frova (1961) 419–34.

disguises these facts, making Judea a separate province and belittling its equestrian governors with the title of procurator (at first mention), highlighting their weakness of character and maladministration—in keeping with the model of the dastardly ἐπίτροπος,¹⁹ Sabinus, whose actions generated the civil war that required suppression by Varus in 4 BCE (2.16–8, 41).²⁰

Herod's Heirs: Deserving the Diadem

Thus far it might appear that Josephus or the delegations to Augustus advocate a standard Greek position for the Judeans vis-à-vis Rome, one without implications for the situation in Rome, where Josephus writes. We should reject this limitation. First, as we have seen, the *Bellum Judaicum* develops ongoing parallels between Judean and Roman society on salient issues of governance (e.g., civil war, tyranny, succession). Secondly, the rhetoric of freedom and slavery, so rich for discussing the relations of other nations with Rome, had wide currency also in Roman aristocratic discourse on the principate (see also Tac. *Hist.* 1.16; *Ann.* 1.7, 8, 46; *Agr.* 3.1),²¹ and this application was also in Josephus' lexicon.²² Among Roman opponents of the principate, the related questions of monarchy and hereditary succession treated so fully by Josephus turn up repeatedly. Under Vespasian, for example, Hostilianus is said to have incessantly inveighed against monarchy *per se* (Cass. Dio 66.12.1), while Helvidius Priscus challenged the *princeps* for planning a hereditary succession (Cass. Dio 66.13.2; see below). Thirdly, Josephus deposits these burning questions of Herodian monarchy and succession on Augustus' doorstep, the Palatine.

¹⁹ That the Judean procurators were praesidial (in Josephus' account), whereas Sabinus was a *procurator Augusti*, is hardly relevant for the rhetorical effect of this juxtaposition.

²⁰ On the social status of governors: Tac. *Hist.* 5.9, *Ann.* 14.32–3; Lendon (1997) 222–4.

²¹ Plass (1988) 3–68; Roller (2001) 214–33. Epict. *Diatr.* 4.1.12–4 presents Caesar's position as πάντων κύριος (“master of all”) as pre-empting all other claims to freedom, even on the part of a consul; cf. Penwill (2003) 362–7. Keitel (1984) shows that the *Annals* consider the principate an extension of civil war, the city of Rome under a *princeps* an *urbs capta* (“captured city”).

²² After Gaius' death, the senate will no longer tolerate δουλείαν ἐκούσιον οὐχ ὑπομενεῖν (“voluntary slavery,” *Bj* 2.209; cf. *Aj* 19.167–70, 181).

Josephus arranges the story, characteristically, in a concentric “A-B-A” pattern. After the arrival of Archelaus and his challengers (*Bḡ* 2.14–23), Augustus convenes a *consilium* (“advisory meeting,” 25) and the various parties make their speeches for or against his candidacy (26–37). Just when the *princeps* appears ready to make a decision, however (38–9), Josephus cuts away to Judea to describe a bloody civil war there (in 4 BCE), reliably suppressed by Varus,²³ legate of Syria, with three legions (39–79). Then the story returns to Rome for a further hearing in the temple of Apollo on the Palatine, with the delegation of Judean elders now present. Caesar’s final decision (80): Archelaus will be ethnarch, while his brothers Antipas and Philip will govern lesser territories as tetrarchs (93–100). For all the anxiety shown by Augustus, this is plainly a bad decision: Archelaus will immediately (in story time, passing over a decade) prove a tyrant and require banishment by the same emperor (111), whereas Antipas and Philip will govern peacefully for about four decades each. Immediately after Caesar’s decision, Josephus breaks the story to describe yet another pretender to Herod’s throne, whom he tags “Pseudalexander” (101–10).

We might wonder why Josephus imposes this artful structure, whether the rebellion interlude has a bearing on the Herodian succession issue, and most importantly, whether he intends a connection between the succession story and current Roman affairs.

Let us take the structural question first. It is not difficult to see connections between the rebel leaders in Judea and the contenders for the Judean throne in Rome. Josephus has already implied (*Bḡ* 1) that the identity of Herod’s eventual heir will be largely a matter of fortune. Only at the very end did the king change his will to nominate Archelaus, and this constant alteration is the basis for the appeal by Antipas, who was designated king in an earlier version. The whole problem of selecting a successor sounds uncomfortably capricious—like Tiberius’ efforts in *Antiquitates Judaicae* 18.

One of the first things Josephus relates about the heir-apparent Archelaus concerns a diadem. As proof of his resolve to avoid any appearance of presumption, Archelaus claims that when his soldiers fastened a diadem on him in Jericho, he refused to accept it in advance

²³ The audience knew, of course, that the same Varus would lead three legions to destruction in the Teutoburg forest in 9 CE. The Varian disaster receives mention at *Tac. Ann.* 1.3, 43, 55, 57–62, 65, 71; 2.41, 45.

of Augustus' decision (*Bḡ* 2.2–3). Although there seems every reason to trust this claim at this point in the story, the orator representing the opponents of Archelaus before Augustus will cite the same incident for the opposite purpose: to insist that the presumptive heir had planted secret agents to fasten the diadem upon him (27), and that this was in line with a long list of actions demonstrating his impertinence:

νῦν ἡκεῖ παρὰ τοῦ δεσπότου σκιὰν αἰτησόμενος βασιλείας, ἥς ἤρπασεν ἐαντῷ τὸ σῶμα, καὶ ποιῶν οὐ τῶν πραγμάτων ἀλλὰ τῶν ὀνομάτων κύριον Καίσαρα.

(Joseph. *Bḡ* 2.28)

Now he comes here, to claim from his master the mere shadow of kingship, of which he has already seized for himself the substance, thus making Caesar lord not of actual things but only of titles!

Since neither the narrator nor the orator responding for Archelaus, Nicolaus of Damascus (34–6), bothers to rebut this diadem charge, the audience is artfully left uncertain as to what really happened, an uncertainty that deepens the sense of rhetorical mischief. None of the candidates for kingship has any evident merit: all of them use cunning and guile to stake their claims.

Donning a diadem as the ultimate mark of infringement on Caesar's prerogative was a resonant scenario in the 70s. This issue had been the subject of protracted negotiations with Parthia over the kingship of Armenia. In the landmark compromise of 63 CE, Corbulo had arranged that Tiridates (brother of Vologeses I) would be allowed to rule Armenia with Roman consent on the proviso that he voluntarily relinquish his diadem and receive it at the hands of Nero—some years later (Cass. Dio 62.23.3, 63.4.1). In a different vein, Suetonius relates that Titus had once worn a diadem in Memphis, Egypt, while consecrating the bull Apis (*Tit.* 5.3). Although our reporter is quick to note that this was *de rigueur* for the ritual, he mentions the consternation that resulted: Titus had to race to Rome to reassure his father of his fidelity, that in spite of rumors he had no intention of revolt. Finally, in the preceding volume of the *Bellum Judaicum*, as we have seen, King Herod had to lay aside his diadem, granted by Antony, in order to receive it again from the victor of Actium (*Bḡ* 1.387–93; cf. 1.451). Assuming the diadem was a sensitive matter, Josephus portrays the royal heirs as eager to wear the strip while at the same time keenly aware of the power relations involved: they can only accept the symbol of ultimate royal prerogative from the hands of a greater sovereign.

The pathetic character of this condition—men utterly without virtue striving mightily to secure a piece of cloth from the master of the world, which only proclaims their weakness—receives contrapuntal emphasis in the middle (“B”) section of the narrative, where Josephus reverts to Judean affairs. There he identifies two of the rebel leaders in 4 BCE: a royal slave named Simon from across the Jordan River (*Bj* 2.57), and a shepherd named Athrongeus (60). Both of these men, though from the lowest imaginable classes, reportedly wrapped the diadem on themselves. The slave based his claim to royalty on his physical size and beautiful form. Curiously, Tacitus mentions only this figure: *post mortem Herodis, nihil expectato Caesare, Simo quidam regium nomen inuaserat* (“after Herod’s death, and without waiting on Caesar, a certain Simon seized the royal title,” *Hist.* 5.9). Tacitus’ report raises the question whether Josephus’ attribution of slave status is mere slander. Athrongeus, for his part, relied on his strength and courage. The shepherd had four brothers with the same qualities, whom he appointed στρατηγοὶ (“generals”), while αὐτὸς δὲ καθάπερ βασιλεὺς τῶν σεμνοτέρων ἤπτετο πραγμάτων (“he dealt with weightier affairs, just as if he were a king,” *Bj* 2.61).

This is fairly sharp sarcasm. Josephus the partisan of aristocracy, by nesting one story inside the other, puts *all* those who seek monarchical power on more or less the same plane: whether based on heredity, physical size, or some other accident, their claims are equally arbitrary. Virtue and character do not come into view. With such men, the allure of absolute power pre-empts any motive of concern for the people. The diadem is a particularly useful symbol of their power-lust because of its physical absurdity, captured well in a remark of Dio Chrysostom: *κἂν μὲν ἕτερός τις μὴ κατεαγῶς τὴν κεφαλὴν διαδήσῃται, καταγελάται· τοῖς δὲ βασιλεῦσι πρέπειν δοκεῖ καὶ πολλὰ μυριάδες τεθνήκασιν ὑπὲρ τούτου τοῦ ῥάκου* (“if anyone else has his head bound, without a fracture, he is ridiculed; yet for the kings it is thought to be fitting, and countless thousands of men have died for this scrap of cloth,” *Or.* 66.5).

Josephus’ mockery of unworthy power-seekers is reinforced by the story that immediately follows Augustus’ verdict on the Herodian succession. Yet another ambitious young slave, urged on by an older conspirator, conceived the idea of passing himself off as Herod’s murdered son Alexander, with the explanation that those assigned to murder the king’s sons had substituted other bodies and secretly let the heirs go free (*Bj* 2.101–2). On the strength of a certain physical resemblance to Alexander, he imposed upon the Judean communities of Crete, Melos,

Puteoli, and finally Rome to speed him on his way to Augustus and claim the kingship. Josephus delights in recounting how completely those who claimed to know Alexander were duped by the impostor. The *princeps*, however, was having none of it: he consigned “Pseudalexander” to the rowers and executed his evil counselor (106–10). The man’s comical name—shades of Menander—enhances the sarcastic tone.

From an aristocratic point of view, such a tale exposes the root problem with hereditary monarchy. Alas, the masses are quite happy to throw their unstinting support behind any man, even a slave bearing a superficial resemblance to some dead royal. For elite Romans, Nero was a bad enough example of misguided popularity (Tac. *Hist.* 1.4, 16), but Tacitus reports that after his death *many* pretenders to his identity and throne emerged (*Hist.* 2.8). Three are known: one who appeared in 69 and attracted a following on the Greek island of Cynthos, about sixty miles from Pseudalexander’s gullible Melians—Josephus shared with some Romans a contempt for the Greeks (Tac. *Hist.* 2.8, Cass. Dio 64.9.3); Terentius Maximus, during Titus’ reign (Cass. Dio 66.19.3); and a *provocateur* under Domitian supported by the Parthians (Tac. *Hist.* 1.2, Suet. *Ner.* 57.3). Josephus’ Pseudalexander not only drives home the absurdity of the succession project, but he evokes the pining for a lost Julio-Claudian ruler at his own time of writing.

Until now, only the “bad emperors” and their equestrians have come across as despicable in Josephus’ narrative. Augustus is exempt, as almost everywhere in Roman literature, as a leader of great wisdom and generosity. That is as it must be: any overt criticism of the current regime would be foolish; of the revered Augustus, counter-productive. But this does not mean that Josephus refrains from refracted commentary on Augustus and also current affairs. For the irony of the entire succession story is that the hearings to determine who should wear the diadem in Judea are decided by the super-sovereign of the inhabited earth (that is, of both Roman and Parthian empires), who was famous in Rome for his own dynastic problems.

Augustus’ peerless character as administrator and executive was legendary, but his problems in finding—and keeping—a worthy heir were also notorious. He hopefully gave his daughter Iulia in marriage first to his nephew M. Claudius Marcellus, then after Marcellus’ death to his friend M. Vipsanius Agrippa, then after Agrippa’s death to his wife’s son by a previous marriage (Tiberius Claudius Nero), requiring the last two men to divorce for the purpose and hoping in each case to initiate a personal, not official, line of succession. The failure of the

first two husbands and the sons of the second marriage (Lucius and Gaius) to survive, however, along with the reported moral collapse and exile of the long-suffering Iulia, wrought havoc with Augustus' plans, until his eventual, resigned embrace of the equally reluctant Tiberius. Syme comments: "The final and peaceful result was not attained without dissensions in the cabinet, several political crises and several political murders;"²⁴ his chapter on the Augustan succession reveals a process even more tangled than even the listing of candidates above would suggest.²⁵

That Josephus intends irony in expatiating on the Herodian succession hearings before Augustus is suggested by otherwise pointless, yet evidently purposeful, details in his description of the scene:

προσκεψάμενος δὲ ὁ Καῖσαρ τὰ παρ' ἀμφοῖν κατ' ἰδίαν...συνέδριον μὲν ἀθροίζει τῶν ἐν τέλει Ῥωμαίων, ἐν ᾧ καὶ τὸν ἐξ Ἀγρίππα καὶ Ἰουλίας τῆς θυγατρὸς θετὸν παῖδα Γάιον πρῶτως ἐκάθισεν, ἀποδίδωσι δὲ λόγον αὐτοῖς.

(Joseph. *Bj* 2.25)

Now after Caesar had first considered in private the claims of both sides...he assembled a council of the Romans who were in office, in which for the first time he also seated Gaius, the son adopted from Agrippa and Iulia his daughter, and he gave over the floor to them [the Herodian rivals].

Striking here is the concentration of personal names and relationships with no clear explanation. Josephus presumes audience knowledge. Neither Iulia nor Gaius will appear again in the *Bellum Judaicum*; Marcus Agrippa has figured in book 1, though even there his first appearances received no introduction (118, 400). Why does Josephus bother to mention the three here in a parenthetical clause? The adjective *θετός* ("adopted") stands out as the significant qualifier. For a Roman audience, it evokes Augustus' dashed succession plans, in the person of his beloved Gaius.

Gaius Iulius Caesar (20 BCE–4 CE) and his younger brother Lucius were adopted by their grandfather in 17 BCE and groomed from infancy for eventual succession of some kind. The story time here (4 BCE) was an auspicious moment in Gaius' life: the year before he assumed the toga of manhood at 15, and had been then designated future consul; he was also *princeps iuuentutis* ("first among the knights"), a token of future

²⁴ Syme (1939) 415.

²⁵ Syme (1939) 419–39.

glory. At the age of 19 (1 BCE) he would be given consular authority to negotiate with the Parthian king over Armenia, where the Parthians had installed Tigranes. Although the young man apparently resolved the dispute diplomatically, he would not live to inherit Augustus' wealth or status. He became consul as planned in 1 CE but, wounded the following year, he died in Lycia in 4 CE (Suet. *Aug.* 26, 29, 64–5, 67, 93; Tac. *Ann.* 1.3; Cass. Dio 54.8, 54.18, 55.9). Since the East was Gaius' sphere of activity, his attendance at this meeting of easterners contending for "sovereignty" on the Palatine is all the more charged.

A Roman audience could not but feel the pathos of this moment: Augustus, mercilessly harassed in his dynastic hopes by *atrox fortuna* ("bitter fortune"), patiently hearing the claimants to succession of a loyal client king in Judea. But it would all come to naught, on both sides. Augustus' problems were far from over, and his choice for Judea turns out to be a disaster (*Bj* 2.111).

Vespasian's Issue: The Flavian Succession

A crucial component of Vespasian's program was his dynastic ambition. Like his paradigmatic predecessor, Augustus, Vespasian would claim success in vanquishing an eastern menace, issue *capta* coins to mark this watershed, and take credit for ending a virulent and costly civil war—even if all these threats had been far less intense, durable, and costly than those faced by the first *princeps*. Both rulers promised the Roman people a golden age of peace; both took the rare step of ceremonially closing the Temple of Janus in celebration;²⁶ and both initiated massive building projects—*ex manubiis* ("from the spoils of [the recent] war," *Res Gestae* 21)²⁷—to reshape the city of Rome and permanently memorialize their achievements.²⁸

Both men supposed that the best guarantee of stability for a bright new era lay in planning for succession. Just as Augustus in 29 BCE celebrated his triple triumph with his adolescent nephew and heir-apparent Marcellus riding prominently alongside, so a century later Vespasian would include in his magnificent triumph both his older son and

²⁶ Augustus closed it three times, claiming it had been closed only twice before (*Res Gestae* 13).

²⁷ For Vespasian: Alföldy (1995) 195–226.

²⁸ Waters (1963) 198–218; Levick (1999) 66–73; Cody (2002) 103–23.

Jerusalem's conqueror, Titus—with him in the *quadriga* (“chariot”)—and the teenaged Domitian, following on a white stallion. For Augustus the disclosure of a dynastic intention may have been fraught with peril in principle, given the novelty of his arrangement with the senate, the basis of his powers in his personal *auctoritas*, and the absurdity of monarchical succession when there was no official monarchy.²⁹ Yet his clear efforts to identify a successor seem to have been largely welcomed by an anxious senate. Augustus' promotion of Marcellus, ostentatious advancement of Gaius and Lucius (*Res Gestae* 14), and ultimately his elevation of Tiberius, to share almost all of his powers, made his dynastic intention patent—even if the implications for Roman government had yet to be sorted out. The familial scene in the south frieze of the *Ara Pacis* (9 BCE), various remarks about his heirs in the *Res Gestae* (e.g., 20, 22), and a programmatic statement about placing the *res publica* on a new foundation for posterity³⁰ combine with other evidence to show that Augustus viewed himself as *princeps* with dynastic strings attached.

Amid the shockingly rapid replacement of *principes* through 68–9 CE and their feeble efforts to identify successors in their bids to gain popular and military confidence,³¹ Vespasian's grown sons were patent advantages for his own claim. For one thing, it was more difficult to assassinate three men than one. For another, heredity precluded the rivalries and disappointments that adoption or election of an heir would inevitably entail.³² A victorious general who arrived with an heir of proven *uir* *tus* (“courage”) as well as a spare held obvious promise for future stability.³³ Josephus' report, quoted at the head of this essay, about Vespasian's advantage over Vitellius on this score is matched by Mucianus' speech of encouragement to Vespasian according to Tac-

²⁹ Parsi (1963) 2–12; Syme (1939) 415; Waters (1963) 198–9. Gruen (2005) 33–50 forcefully develops these points, arguing that Augustus carefully cultivated the powers of *tribunicia potestas* (“tribunician power”) and special *imperium*, with which he could gradually associate a worthy colleague, without connection with any republican office.

³⁰ *Ita mihi saluam ac sospitem rem p. sistere in sua sede liceat atque eius rei fructum percipere, quem peto, ut optimi status auctor dicar et moriens ut feram mecum spem, mansura in uestigio suo fundamenta rei p. quae iecero* (“may it be permitted me to establish the commonwealth on a safe and secure basis, and also to enjoy its fruit, which I seek; but only if I may be renowned as author of the best possible form, so that when I die I may take with me the hope that the foundations of the commonwealth that I have laid will stand firm in the sequel,” Suet. *Aug.* 28.2).

³¹ See Waters (1963) 206.

³² So Waters (1963) 206.

³³ See Levick (1999) 184.

tus: *tuae domui triumphale nomen, duo iuvenes, capax iam imperii alter et primis militiae annis apud Germanicos quoque exercitus clarus* ("your house has the renown of a triumph, and two young men—the one already a worthy partner in *imperium*, who even in his earliest military years was celebrated among the German armies," *Hist.* 2.77) Vespasian seems to have been convinced: he is elsewhere reported to have emerged from an interview with the meddlesome praetor Helvidius Priscus (see above), who had challenged the principle of hereditary succession, defiantly exclaiming through tears, ἐμὲ μὲν υἱὸς διαδέξεται, ἢ οὐδεὶς ἄλλος ("my son will succeed me, or no one will!"), Cass. Dio 66.12.1).³⁴

Evidence abounds that, from his first stirrings of imperial ambition, Vespasian began grooming Titus as his inevitable successor and guarantor of stability.³⁵ He shared the ordinary consulship with Titus an unprecedented seven times in his ten-year reign (in 70, 72, 74, 75, 76, 77, and 79; Suet. *Titus* 6),³⁶ with Domitian in 71. In the last four of these years Domitian was suffect, and in 71 ordinary consul. Upon his return from Judea in 71, Titus received the crucial *tribunicia potestas* (index of senatorial approval, enabling a smooth succession),³⁷ fourteen salutations as *imperator* during his father's reign, and a level of *imperium* close to that of his father (shades of M. Vipsanius Agrippa); he also shared the censorship with Vespasian for a year (Suet. *Titus* 6).³⁸ Both sons appeared as *principes iuventutis* (*principes-in-waiting*) in Augustan style, on Vespasian's coins. The hyperbolic character of Titus' honors under Vespasian is noted by Levick, who remarks on the contradiction inherent in being *princeps iuventutis* while already serving as consul.³⁹ Ruth Taylor has argued that Valerius Flaccus wrote his *Argonautica* in large measure to flatter Vespasian and his dynastic ambitions, and to link Vespasian as Jason with Augustus as Hercules.⁴⁰

Yet there were cracks, surely as obvious to Josephus' Roman contemporaries as they are to us, in this charming picture of a virtuous and

³⁴ See Malitz (1985) 242–3.

³⁵ On the following, see Jones (1984) 77–113.

³⁶ For analysis Gallivan (1981) 187–9; on Suetonius, Jones and Milns (2002) 102. Such imperial domination of the consulate, the highest position open to senators and a necessary stage in the *cursus honorum* ("progression of honors"), caused resentment (Plin. *Pan.* 58.4).

³⁷ Jones (1984) 80.

³⁸ Jones and Milns (2002) 61, 102.

³⁹ Levick (1999) 187.

⁴⁰ Taylor (1994) 215, 222–4.

duly prepared hereditary succession. In spite of Augustus' hopes for future stability, a perpetual succession crisis had become the Achilles' heel of the Julio-Claudian house. After that dynasty dissolved in the chaos of 68–9, even the emergence of a new and promising *princeps* with natural offspring must have left residual anxiety. First, there was the glaring problem of Titus' character, popular views of which are reported with surprising detail by a witness who wishes to deny any basis to them. Before acquiring absolute control, but while already holding many instruments of power, Titus was widely considered a ruthless Praetorian Prefect (Suet. *Titus* 6), libidinous and corrupt in his social and financial dealings (*Titus* 7). Secondly, we have substantial independent evidence of intense rivalry between Domitian and his older brother, even while Vespasian lived. Although the reportage is no doubt colored by our reporters' animosity toward the memory of Domitian, it would be reckless to dismiss all the evidence as *ex post facto* revision. It could not have been obvious to observers of the time, possibly even to Vespasian,⁴¹ that the Flavian succession would be a smooth and tranquil affair.

Thirdly, in a dissertation that will no doubt become an important book, Leoni has argued persuasively that during his brief reign Titus abandoned Vespasian's effort to establish the familial succession, attempting instead a rapprochement with the senate by opting for a successor who was *optimus* ("best") rather than merely kin.⁴² Although the brevity of Titus' reign makes firm conclusions hazardous, such a motive would best explain his conspicuous failure to share *imperium* with Domitian as Vespasian had shared it with him. His reluctance to groom his brother was a noticeable shift from original hopes for orderly succession from Vespasian to his two sons. Leoni argues that Titus wished to repristinate the illusion of a *libertas senatus* ("freedom of the senate").⁴³

Although Vespasian began with the firm and explicit intention of establishing a dynasty, elite observers throughout the 70s and 80s must have had remaining concerns about the outcome. The issue did not go away. Josephus wrote much of his *Bellum Judaicum* under Vespasian, but seems to have completed it under Titus's brief reign, which may

⁴¹ Waters (1963) 216.

⁴² Leoni (2000) 101–7.

⁴³ Leoni (2000) 106.

have begun a new direction in the selection of a *princeps* though it did not overturn the monarchic principle.

Conclusion

By the time of Josephus, Roman governance had for decades been an undeclared monarchy, though from Galba onwards the mechanism of succession to supreme office was again an open question. The main options were heredity, adoption of an heir (from within the larger family or from outside), acclamation by the army, selection of the “best man” by the senate, or military coup. Every option but senatorial selection and inheritance by grown sons had been discredited by the Julio-Claudian experiment or the civil war following. These two appeared the most desirable solutions, to different groups, in the 70s. Although Vespasian came to power in a military coup, like his immediate predecessors, he wasted no time in vaunting an assured succession, through his sons, that would preclude such bloodshed in the future.

It is curious that Josephus, in a work about the recent Judean-Roman war and, incidentally, the Flavian rise to power, should devote such considerable space to the problem of succession. In both the *Bellum Judaicum* and the *Antiquitates Judaicae* he accompanies his advocacy of senatorial aristocracy (for Judea) with a sustained critique of monarchy and especially hereditary succession. In both works, crucially, Josephus connects this critique explicitly and implicitly with Roman affairs from Julius Caesar through the Julio-Claudians.

In evaluating the possible intentions and effects in Rome of Josephus’ critique, we recall first that it was a well-worn tactic of “safe criticism” to target not the current regime, but other figures with conspicuously similar traits: one’s audience could be trusted to make the link (Demetr. *Eloc.* 292–3).⁴⁴ Josephus’ treatment of Herod and heirs, along with the earlier Roman *principes* and pretenders (both Judean and Roman), provided ample material for reflection on the current problem. That Josephus intended such safe criticism is likely because he employs other techniques from the same manual, such as hyperbolic praise of current rulers. His Titus is endowed with so much *πρόνοια* (“forethought”) and *ἔλεος* (“gentle commiseration”) that he appears an improbable

⁴⁴ Ahl (1984a) 190, 206.

humanist and even incompetent general, frequently tricked by the wily Judeans (*Bḡ* 4.84–120; 5.316, 329; 6.12, 29–32, 78–9, 152–6, 183–4, 190, 214–28, 356). An embarrassing episode in the young Domitian's life is transformed, with savage satire, into a glorious achievement (7.85–8). In general, Josephus proves himself a dab hand at barbed or figured speech—irony, *double entendre*, and sarcasm. He is one of the heavier users of *ieron*-language,⁴⁵ always alive to σχήματα (“figures”) and προφάσεις (“pretexts”).⁴⁶

But what exactly was his point with the critique of monarchy and succession? Such tensions as existed between senate and *princeps* appear to have sprung from *ad hoc* and personal causes; there is little indication of a coherent opposition to the monarchy, much less a movement for the return of the republic,⁴⁷ thus of a group for whom Josephus' analysis might have been significantly motivating. Evidence does exist for the senate's assertion of its prerogative in selecting the *optimus princeps*. Josephus has the consuls of 41 demand the right *either* to recover the old aristocratic constitution *or* to choose themselves τὸν ἄξιον τῆς ἡγεμονίας (“the man most worthy of rule,” *Bḡ* 2.205)—both options acceptable as consonant with their *libertas*. Galba's adoption of Licinianus Piso was a deliberate effort to choose as heir the best man—member of a prominent senatorial family, son of a consul and victim of Nero (Tac. *Hist.* 1.15–6)—and Helvidius' apparent insistence upon adoption of the best man, which angered Vespasian (Cass. Dio 66.12.1), was an assertion of senatorial prerogative. Indeed, Trajan will adopt the Spaniard Hadrian, forced by others (if not the senate) to break new ground in choosing the “best” candidate.⁴⁸ Leoni's hypothesis that Titus had also begun to move in this direction when his life abruptly ended is tantalizing for the question of Josephus' motives and influence. Since Josephus published his *Bellum Judaicum* during that same brief interval of Titus' reign, it is just conceivable that he influenced the *princeps* in making a fuller accommodation of the senate. That influence would not have come from the text of the *Bellum Judaicum* (a cumbersome instrument for making an argument), of course, but rather from conversations on

⁴⁵ Josephus has sixteen occurrences, thirteen in the *War*, about the same number as Plutarch and significantly more than all other historians and philosophers but Aristotle.

⁴⁶ Mason (2005) 243–88.

⁴⁷ See, e.g., Raaflaub (1987) 56–63 and the approving responses of leading scholars in that volume.

⁴⁸ Grainger (2003) 70–100.

issues that the *Bellum Judaicum* shows were of interest to Josephus. One might even argue that Josephus' much more elaborate and overt return to the problem of monarchical succession in the *Antiquitates Judaicae* was elicited by the circumstances of Domitian's Rome in 93 CE.

Enticing though such speculation may be, we need not seek such a specific purpose in these relatively minor supporting themes of Josephus' narrative. His critique of hereditary succession and monarchy was timely and relevant, but it was also safe—aimed at the Hasmoneans, Herodians, and Julio-Claudians. It was serious, but executed with a light touch. It seems, at least, that Josephus wished to engage a similarly minded aristocratic audience in his adopted city, to impress them with his credentials and subtlety as a writer, to insinuate the shared values of Roman and Judean elites, and so to maintain a place in post-war Rome for the conquered ἔθνος (“people”) he represented. Historical narrative does not make good propaganda, but it does allow infinite latitude to play, suggestion, evocation, and irony. Since Josephus is the most prolific author from Flavian Rome whose works have survived intact, and the only historian, his *oeuvre* invites closer attention from these perspectives.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ For financial support, I am grateful to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada; for critical engagement, to Erich Gruen, Tommaso Leoni, and Zuleika Rodgers.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

NAVIGATING POWER: VALERIUS FLACCUS' *ARGONAUTICA*

Andrew Zissos

Introduction

A cursory examination suffices to grasp the extent to which Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* is embedded in a specific culture and historical moment. As numerous critics have pointed out, the world in which the Thessalian hero Jason and his fellow *Minyae* move has been thoroughly "Romanized." Despite the intrinsically Greek background of the myth and the use of Apollonius Rhodius as principal narrative model, Valerius' poem manifests a preoccupation with Roman culture and history.¹ In the first book, for example, the Argonauts' nautical exploits are implausibly likened to those of Vespasian during Claudius' British expedition (1.7–9), Jupiter is made to predict a succession of world empires that will culminate in Rome (542–60), and victorious Roman generals win the eternal peace of Elysium (835–7; discussed below); elsewhere references to Roman affairs, practices and institutions abound.² Equally striking is the tendency anachronistically to impose

¹ For the very different socio-cultural milieux in which Apollonius and Valerius were writing, see Alfonsi (1970) 117–32; Serpa (1979) 79–88. On Valerius' frequent alteration of the myth to create links to the Roman world, see Summers (1894) 56–7; Mozley (1934) xi–xiii; Bardon (1940) 289–303; Kröner (1968) 733–54; Pollini (1984) 51–61; Boyle (1991) 272–5. As Schetter (1960) 125 notes, this aspect of Valerius' narrative distinguishes his approach from that of his contemporary Statius, who shuns references to contemporary and more remote Roman history. For Valerius' "Romanizing" depiction of individual characters, see below and, more generally, Hershkowitz (1998b) 127–50.

² Particularly noteworthy are 1.12–4 (Flavian conquest of Jerusalem); 1.682–5 (rites to avert drought in Calabria); 2.245–6 (the *Fasti*, or lists of Roman magistrates); 2.304–5 (the grove of Egeria); 2.619–20 (the god Janus); 3.417–58 (a Roman purification ceremony); 4.507–9 (the eruption of Vesuvius; cf. 3.208–9); 5.251–2 (an evocation of the cry of a Roman general in the grove of Mars when war is declared); 6.55–6 (the *legio fulminata*: see Otte (1992) 126–7); 6.402–6 (Roman civil war, probably that of 69 CE: see Preiswerk (1934) 440–1; Ussani (1955) 52–3; Strand (1972) 25); 6.410–1 (shipwrecks on the coasts of Latium); 7.83–6 (Tyrrhenian merchants); 7.232–4 (the Italian hero Picus and the Tyrrhenian sea); 7.635–6 (the festival of Bellona); 8.243–6 (a Roman wedding custom). More diffuse Romanizing touches have also been detected: e.g., Schubert (1991) 125–6 subtly observes that the heightened prominence of Jupiter,

Roman geographical conceptions and categories, often by substituting them for properly Greek references in the corresponding passages of Apollonius.³ In short, an impulse to “Romanize” pervades Valerius’ epic, often seeming stronger than the desire to evoke an “authentic” Greek legendary past.

Beyond the enumeration of such unambiguous manifestations of *Romanitas*, scholars have sought to identify the political perspective of the poem. This has for the most part involved associating narrative contents with contemporary figures and events.⁴ Preiswerk, for example, reads book 1 as a justification for the expedition of Petillius Cerialis to Britain in 71 CE.⁵ Arcellaschi sees the epic as justifying Titus’ policies in the east.⁶ Otte, Toohey and Taylor read the poem variously as sustained political allegory, which is—at least initially—pro-Flavian in orientation.⁷ Such readings depend upon elaborate and sustained symbolic

Juno and Minerva, who comprise the so-called Capitoline Triad, constitutes a partial intrusion of Roman *theologia civilis* into the *theologia fabulosa* of epic. On the microcosmic level as well, there is as well a pervasive anachronistic cultural “overlay,” though that is normative for Roman epic. Early examples include a favorable omen appearing on the left at 1.156–7 (the Greeks regarded the right side as propitious); and Pelias referring to his *penates* (Roman protective household deities) at 1.721.

³ See Shreeves (1978) 119–34.

⁴ Such elaborate allegorizing is to be distinguished from the more restrained analysis of critics like Summers and Burck, who detect echoes of historical figures and situations in passages such as Pelias’ scheming against Jason (see below, n. 19) without arguing for sustained networks of allusion.

⁵ Preiswerk (1934) 435. This interpretation, which is but a small part of Preiswerk’s suggestive analysis, draws upon Bernays (1861) 50–1.

⁶ Arcellaschi (1990) 442: “Il est évident que les *Argonautiques* de Valérius Flaccus, par rapport à la politique caucasienne de Titus, ont joué un rôle équivalent à celui qu’avaient les *Argonautiques* de Varron par rapport aux projets de César à propos les Parthes.” For skeptical responses to this reading, see Liberman (1997) x n. 10; Ripoll (1998) 508 n. 210.

⁷ Otte (1992) 11–2 sees the poem’s presentation of the passage of humanity to a new (and better) age as a broad allegory for “the transition from the disasters of Nero and the civil war of 69 to the promise of peace and stability under Vespasian.” He later argues (98) that Bacchus provides a paradigm for imperial apotheosis, and suggests that the mention of Bacchus’ eastern conquests at 5.75–80 echo the brief account of Titus’ conquest of Jerusalem at 1.12–14. Toohey (1993) 191 argues that Jason stands as a “mythic, heroic prototype for the Roman emperor and his empire”—a poor choice, as it turns out, because “Jason was too ambiguous a hero for such an analogic function.” Toohey reads Jason as a cipher for Vespasian in the early narrative (as the poem might suggest; but cf. below, n. 9) and Domitian in the second half. Much is made of Minerva’s prominence in the poem, which is explained as arising from Domitian’s well-known enthusiasm for that goddess (*nec sua Crethiden latuit dea*, 6.609 is adduced as affirming the analogy Jason/Domitian, linking the Colchian wars in book 6 with Domitian’s eastern campaigns). Taylor (1994) 212–35 proposes an elaborate political allegory, in which the mythical end of the Golden Age is mapped onto the historical collapse of the Julio-Claudian dynasty and the rise of the Flavians. In this

equations, the subjective perception of which makes them inherently difficult to verify or disprove.⁸ In addition, they rely on fundamentally intentionalist conceptions of the poem's politics.⁹ A more broadly "sociological" approach is undertaken by Serpa, who views Valerius' epic as a sophisticated literary product of the Flavian court, serving ideologically to confirm the power structures of the new regime.¹⁰ For Serpa, the *Argonautica* is "l'opera della nuova classicità, dell'ordine ristabilito, delle rinsaldate convinzioni, non solo letterarie, ma anche

scheme Hercules stands in for Augustus, Jason for Vespasian, Medea for Berenice, while the tyrannical tandem of Pelias and Aeetes represent Nero. For a skeptical response to Taylor's thesis, see Liberman (1997) lxvi n. 92. These interpretations, Taylor's in particular, owe something to the thesis of Ehlers (1971–1972) 115 that "das Epos nicht nur die Argo zum Thema hat, sondern auch die Legitimierung des flavischen Hauses durch ein Leistung, durch die sie den götterentsprossenen Juliern überlegen ist." It should be noted, however, that the author subsequently distanced himself from this thesis at Ehlers (1991) 21–2.

⁸ Davis (1980) attempts a looser allegorical approach, arguing that the Argo symbolizes the Roman state, and the voyage represents the quest for its destiny. This allegorical approach becomes looser still in Davis (1990), which characterizes the poem as a meditation "on traditional Roman virtues such as *pietas*, *fides* and *pudor*" (70), seeking "to champion traditional values in the face of change, resist extension of Roman rule and warn about the dangers of intrusion of foreign culture" (48).

⁹ Problematic for such readings is the dearth of echoes of the initial Flavian apologia (1.7–21) in the narrative proper, and especially the failure to continue developing the parallels between Vespasian and Jason established at 1.7–9: so, e.g., Syme (1929) 129; Bardon (1940) 293; Barnes (1981) 370; Franchet d'Espèrey (1986) 3075; Conte (1994) 490–1; Ehlers (1991) 22; Wacht (1991) 18–21; Ripoll (1998) 508–9; cf. *contra* Otte (1992) 47 n. 4, 98 (discussed above, n. 7). The prevailing critical view is that after the proem Valerius abstains from significant dynastic celebration of any kind: thus, e.g., Hull (1979) 404–6; Franchet d'Espèrey (1986) 3075; cf. *contra* Toohey (1993) and Taylor (1994) (discussed above, n. 7). Köstlin (1889) 648–50 understood "ein Hindeutung auf die Flavier" at 1.563, 836 and 2.304, but this view is despatched by Syme (1929) 129 n. 2. Given that imperial panegyric was an expected component of poetic compositions of the period, Valerius would appear punctually to have met the minimum requirement, and then let the matter drop. Cf. Franchet d'Espèrey (1986) 3075; Ripoll (1998) 509. On the "temperate and restrictive" tone of the imperial panegyric in comparison with similar passages in Lucan, Statius, Silius and Martial, see Strand (1972) 26; similarly Tandoi (1985) 155 notes that of the Flavian epicists Valerius is "il più immune... nel linguaggio dalle rigide norme di... 'Kaiserkult.'"

¹⁰ Serpa (1979) 79–88. Along similar lines, Ripoll (1998) 518 suggests that the themes announced in book 1—oriental conquest, promotion of *commercium mundi* by the establishment of universal peace, exaltation of the "thème dynastique"—echo the themes of Flavian numismatic propaganda. This also fails to convince: universal peace is hardly what the poem, whose proleptic focus never strays far from the Trojan war, projects (cf., e.g., Jupiter's portentous declaration to the war goddess Bellona: *uia facta per undas/perque hiemes, Bellona, tibi*, "a path through waves and storms has been made for you, Bellona," 1.545–6). Even granting Ripoll's thesis, it would still be necessary to interrogate the precise narrative treatment, which is frequently inflected with irony or pessimism: see Zissos (2004) 21–38.

dell'ottimismo sociale."¹¹ But such a reading is difficult to square with Valerius' uniformly pessimistic treatment of class relations, and with the relentless tragic adumbrations of the later books.¹²

Attempts to deny Valerius' poem any political content whatsoever are too narrowly conceived.¹³ Literary texts inevitably reflect upon their historical moment and its ideological tensions—in part unconsciously, and hence independently of overt authorial intention or ostensible political affiliation.¹⁴ Thus, while it is often difficult securely to identify allusions to specific historical figures and events, it is invariably profitable to interrogate the socio-cultural and political givens, as well as the historical dynamic—or, to put it another way, the “conditions of possibility”—underlying a poem's composition. This chapter will explore how Valerius' construction of political structures and class relations in an assortment of narrative domains provides an ideologically charged reflection of contemporary Roman realities.

The Politics of Thessaly

The Hellenized education of the traditional aristocracy had, by the end of the republic, imposed the Greek mythological hero as an idealized, noble figure called upon to conquer or impose justice upon the world.¹⁵ This was a figure with which the elite Roman male could and did identify: Greek myth accordingly provided the upper classes with an important medium of ideological expression.¹⁶ In the early imperial

¹¹ Serpa (1979) 83. The same scholar suggests (84) that Valerius' purported rejection of Lucan derives from a transcendence of the trauma and despair of the Neronian era (cf. *contra* below, n. 12).

¹² More judicious is the assessment of Franchet d'Espèrey (1998) 222: “la vision du monde qu'ils [Valerius and the other Flavian epicists] tentent d'exprimer et qui est celle de leur génération...correspond d'abord à une pessimisme que la restauration flavienne ne parvient pas à atténuer, cars ils savent, ce que ne savait pas Virgile, qu'aucun renouveau n'est définitif.” For Franchet d'Espèrey, the Flavian epicists do not reverse the pessimism of the *De Bello Civili*: their own pessimism is merely less absolute than Lucan's: cf. Zissos (2004) 21–5.

¹³ Cf. Franchet d'Espèrey (1986) 3075: “son épopée...reste en dehors des préoccupations politiques;” similarly Bardon (1940) 289–303; Mendell (1967) 128. More rich and suggestive, though still nominally “apolitical,” are Scaffai (1986) 234 and Ripoll (1998) 508–9.

¹⁴ See Jameson (1984).

¹⁵ This section reproduces, with some modification, the argument of Zissos (2003) 668–77.

¹⁶ Sauron (1999) 593.

period, epic remains a genre associated with (and now increasingly written by) the aristocracy.¹⁷ But the view of history conventionally inscribed in Roman epic—that of a heroic aristocracy—is subjected to increasing ideological pressure in the Flavian period.¹⁸ One of the central conflicts within elite Roman culture at this time was the incompatibility between aristocratic ambition and desire for public distinction on the one hand and the new limitations imposed by the political configurations of the principate on the other. This tension surfaces almost immediately in Valerius' narrative, when Jason's heroism and popular renown is presented as problematic for the tyrant Pelias: *instat fama uiri uirtusque haud laeta tyranno* ("the immense renown [of Jason] weighs upon him, and the valor—never pleasing for a tyrant" 1.30).¹⁹ This is a suggestive divergence from the traditional version of the myth, in which the quest for the golden fleece was Jason's first notable deed. The deviation creates a correspondence with contemporary Rome, where aristocratic exercise of authority or pursuit of military glory was likewise decidedly double-edged: indeed, it was a commonplace of the later first century that success in this sphere would draw the hostile attention of the emperor.²⁰ Thus, at its very outset, the *Argonautica* signals a reprocessing

¹⁷ The mention in the proem of a tripod "sharing in the secrets of the Cymaean prophethess" (i.e., the Sibyl) residing in the poet's own house (*Cumaeae mihi conscia uatis/stat casta cortina domo*, 1.5–6) has led to a long-standing and widespread assumption that Valerius was one of the priests in charge of the Sibylline books, the *quindecimuirī sacris faciundis*: see Boyancé (1964) 334–46 for a detailed advocacy. But a number of scholars have rightly sounded a note of caution against taking this as literal autobiography: e.g., Newman (1986) 221 n. 70; Davis (1990) 72 n. 14; Barchiesi (2001) 326–7; Spaltenstein (2002) 26–7. If Valerius was a *quindecimuir*, then he was probably of the senatorial order. If not, then the authorial pose as a member of an important priesthood with the highest literary and vatic credentials, traditionally drawn from the most noble Roman families, has obvious ideological resonance.

¹⁸ Cf. the thoughtful analysis of Hull (1979) 404–8.

¹⁹ While the tandem Hercules/Eurystheus provides a mythical paradigm for the relationship between Jason and Pelias, scholars have often noted similarities to historical relationships. Summers (1894) 55, Burck (1971) 48–50, and Hull (1979) 405 point out the similarities between Pelias' treatment of his nephew Jason and the popular perception of Tiberius' behavior towards Germanicus, with specific allusion to the latter's eastern expedition at Tiberius' behest; Scaffai (1986) 242 points rather to the similarity with Sallust's account of the relationship between Micipsa and Jugurtha at *Iug.* 6.1–3. As Ripoll (1998) 487 notes, the common elements are an aging ruler, with a son as yet too young to succeed him, who is troubled by the valor and popular renown of a potential rival, and so devises a dangerous mission in order to eliminate that rival.

²⁰ The idea that "bad" emperors detested *uirtus* in their subjects was a commonplace of imperial writers (cf., e.g., Tac. *Agr.* 41, where Domitian is described as *infensus uirtutibus princeps*). It is worth noting that the stress here on Jason's established reputation

of the traditional mythic material in ways that resonate with the concerns of the Roman upper classes of the imperial period.

A little later, the poem establishes a more striking homology between its hero and the contemporary Roman aristocrat, as latent political tensions in Flavian Rome are given a further indirect expression on the narrative level. This occurs when Jason, challenged by Pelias to retrieve the golden fleece, carefully considers his options. Upon realizing that the tyrant is craftily engineering his destruction, Jason's first impulse is to raise a rebellion:

heu quid agat? populumne leuem ueterique tyranno
infensum atque olim miserantes Aesona patres
aduocet...?

(V. Fl. 1.71–3)

Ah what is he to do? Should he call to his aid the fickle populace, hostile to the old tyrant, and the Fathers that long now have pitied Aeson...?

The explicit stratification of a fictive Thessalian society into distinct segments or power blocs—*populus*, *tyrannus*, *patres*—serves to transform the mythic picture by evoking contemporary political realities.²¹ Indeed, the use of the term *patres* (“senators”) in this mythological context invests the scene with an unmistakably Roman flavor.²² More precisely, the existence of senators as a specific political body, and a potential source of support against a single monarch succinctly reproduces the political configuration of the early principate. In other words, the poem here brings to the surface the various polarizations in the socio-political fabric of Flavian Rome. Intriguingly, the thought of leading the *patres* in rebellion is a fleeting one, which fades from consciousness altogether before it can be seriously entertained. In this way, Valerius offers a disconcertingly accurate reflection of an atrophied senatorial class, no longer in possession of a stable power-base and thus ultimately impotent in its anger and resentment against a despotic ruler. Part of the problem was the broad indifference of the *populus* (characterized as *leuis*, “fickle”) to the concerns of the entrenched aristocracy: the senatorial

for courage not only goes against the traditional picture of Jason as an untried youth, but also contradicts Valerius' subsequent depiction of Jason at 3.80–2.

²¹ Scaffai (1986) 244; Ripoll (1998) 202; Zissos (2003) 671–2.

²² Cf. Langen (1896–1897) 29: *recte intelleguntur nobiles, quasi senatores* (“rightly construed as ‘noblemen,’ virtually ‘senators’”).

class failed to gain consistent support among the lower classes.²³ At any rate, Jason's doubts over the feasibility of class alliance are presently reiterated by Aeson who, like his son, fleetingly entertains the possibility of raising a rebellion with the help of both the sympathetic *patres* and the inconstant *uulgus* ("populace"):²⁴

sic curae subiere ducem, ferrumne capessat
imbelle atque acui senior gestamina primi
an patres regnique acuat mutabile uulgus.

(V. Fl. 1.759–61)

...so do cares come upon the leader [Aeson]: should he seize the feeble sword and the weaponry of early youth, though an old man, or should he rouse the *patres* and the kingdom's fickle populace?

From the initial narrative, then, it emerges that the conditions of possibility for the composition of the Flavian *Argonautica* arise in the wake of a political transition after which the old freedoms and possibilities of the republic are no longer available—though they are not yet inconceivable. Valerius presents a Thessalian political system in which the mechanisms of domination exploited by the tyrant are pervasive and are aimed at further restricting the vestiges of aristocratic status and power. These early passages offer a punctual diagnosis of the difficulties faced by the entrenched aristocracy in the later first century. They speak to the increasing isolation and powerlessness of this class, and to simmering tensions with the imperial establishment, resulting in a familiar pattern of mingled accommodation and resistance.²⁵

The concluding episode of the first book, featuring the "political suicide" of Jason's parents, is yet another scene rich in contemporary resonance.²⁶ In this passage, which departs once again from Apollonius'

²³ See, e.g., Starr (1954) 120–6. At the same time, 1.71–3 (quoted above) and 5.265–7 (quoted below) indicate a normative absence of genuine affection between tyrant and people. Likewise, in a suggestive reversal of Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 2.98–100, the Bebrycian people do *not* seek to avenge their slain king: *Bebrycas extemplo spargit fuga; nullus adempti regis amor* ("the Bebrycians immediately scatter in flight; they have no love for their slain king," 4.315–16) with Korn (1989) 205.

²⁴ On the connection between the two scenes, see Shelton (1971) 49–50; Adamietz (1976) 27; Zissos (2003) 672 n. 41.

²⁵ The one unnamed element in the equation is the soldiery, whose support of the tyrant Pelias must be inferred from the opening line of the narrative and later developments (e.g., 1.702–3, 752–4). Valerius' narrative only implies what all knew—namely, that the power of the *princeps* rested on his control of the army. See further Zissos (2003) 671 n. 40. The same situation evidently holds in Colchis, as discussed below.

²⁶ The seminal discussion is Preiswerk (1934) 439–40.

plot line, Pelias orders the execution of Jason's father shortly after Argo's departure (1.700–29).²⁷ Upon hearing the news, Aeson and his wife Alcimede decide to anticipate the death sentence by taking their own lives rather than wait for the arrival of the imperial executioners (730–73). Through voluntary death Aeson finds the only means of surmounting Pelias' murderous rage, the only way to retain a measure of freedom or control over his own destiny.²⁸ Once again, the passage bears an unmistakable contemporary stamp. The poet has created a death scene all too familiar to the nobles of the early principate, a scene repeatedly recorded in Tacitus' scathing chronicle of the period.²⁹ As McGuire notes, the suicide of Aeson and Alcimede suggestively reproduces many of the details found in the historical accounts: the monarch's death sentence itself, the choice of the wife to die with her husband, the arrival of troops or magistrates at the home of the condemned, and the striking disjunction between the private circumstances of the suicide and the overtly public status of the executioners.³⁰

From its very opening, then, the *Argonautica* manifests a preoccupation with the shifting power equations of the early empire and, more specifically, with the increasing pressures and restrictions imposed upon elite life under the principate. Valerius' immense poetic debt to Vergil is well known and does not need rehearsing here; the ideological differences between the two epics have received rather less critical attention. The *Aeneid* is an epic of nationhood focused on a single preeminent hero who, by taking the weight of his people's destiny on his shoulders, stands as prototype for the *princeps* Augustus: this focus largely brackets

²⁷ The more popular version had Aeson alive for Jason's homecoming, and some accounts (e.g., Ov. *Met.* 7.159–296) have him magically rejuvenated by his newly acquired daughter-in-law Medea. Aeson's suicide is reported by the historian Diodorus Siculus (4.50), an important prose source for Valerius. The Flavian poet nonetheless innovates in locating the suicide at such an early stage in the narrative, and also in investing it with powerful contemporary socio-political overtones, as discussed below.

²⁸ Vessey (1973) 245.

²⁹ Preiswerk (1934) 439–40; Burck (1971) 48–50; McGuire (1997) 192–3. On suicide at Rome in the early imperial period, see Grisé (1980) 17–46; Grisé (1982). The most celebrated Tacitean accounts are *Ann.* 11.3 (the suicide of Asiaticus), 15.61–4 (Seneca), 16.18–9 (Petronius), 16.33–5 (Thrasea Pactus). While noting the common features of these suicides, Preiswerk tentatively suggests that Valerius had that of Seneca, whose wife Paulina attempted to share his fate, in mind: this thesis is taken up by McDonald (1971). Other critics argue for a specific allusion to the other celebrated joint (husband and wife) suicide, that of Thrasea Pactus and his wife Arria (e.g., Taylor [1994] 233–4). The ideological resonance of the scene, of course, requires no such identification.

³⁰ McGuire (1997) 192–3.

off class interactions as such. The *Argonautica*, by contrast, involves not so much a national undertaking against a common foe as a voluntary aristocratic enterprise set in motion by a king's perjury.³¹ It insists on a corporate heroic identity (on which more below) and manifests a heightened preoccupation with class interactions. Politically charged narrative elements such as tyranny and resistance, political suicide, and dissimulation are pervasive.³² Through the use of such elements the poem adumbrates an oppositional perspective that subtly calls into question the prevailing imperial value system of the principate. The epic is thus very much a product of its time and socio-political point of origin. The establishment of monarchy had diminished the power and status of Roman aristocrats both as individuals and (through the progressive weakening of the power and initiative of the senate) as a collective political body.³³ In many respects, the Flavian period saw an acceleration of these trends, as fundamental socio-political formations in elite society were put under increasing strain. On the one hand, there was a hardening of the apparatus of the principate, a progressive dismantling of the face-saving republican façade by which the real

³¹ Blomfield (1916) 92–3.

³² Valuable discussions on all these elements in McGuire (1997); on dissimulation in particular, see Hershkovitz (1998b) 242–74. Valerius evinces an interest, characteristic of imperial epic, in the potential disjunction between outward appearance and inner reality. In the changed political circumstances of imperial Rome, *dissimulatio* quickly became a grim fact of political life. Hershkovitz (1998b) 270 well observes that “like the characters themselves, the epic world in which they live has been Romanized, and the Greek-style cunning, admirable if morally ambiguous when employed by Apollonius’ men and women, has been replaced by Roman Empire-style dissimulation, with all the difficulties and dangers it entails....” Jason’s initial interview with Pelias sets the tone for the poem as a whole. Throughout the meeting, the tyrant assumes a falsely tranquil expression to cloak his murderous intent (1.38–9). Pelias’ *adhortatio* urging Jason to undertake recovery of the golden fleece is followed with a Lucan-esque “negative enumeration” of the mission’s attendant perils, all unmentioned (1.58–63). Such omission is a typical stratagem of the tyrant in Flavian epic: McGuire (1997) 150–1 notes that “silence lies at the heart of the Flavian portraits of tyranny,” which repeatedly “emphasize the importance of concealed emotions and silences in the tyrannical *persona*—characteristics most suggestive in Roman imperial history of Domitian and one of his imperial predecessors, Tiberius.” Contemporary discussion of political repression and tyranny in Rome drew attention to the frequent discrepancy between voice and mind, a “discursive rift” that was to be feared above all in the case of the *princeps*. In more general terms, there is an evident hypertrophy of the informing use of dialogue, a pervasive dysfunction of verbal communication on all levels in Valerius’ poem. In this respect the *Argonautica* is an “epic of inwardness:” monologue is the only consistently sincere form of expression, a uniquely reliable index to the speaker’s psychological disposition.

³³ See Zissos (2003) 675 n. 58 with additional bibliography.

power hierarchy had been dissimulated with the result that the simple realities of power were laid bare.³⁴ On the other, there was a general devaluation of the perceived status and importance of the Roman upper classes.

The Politics of Colchis

The ubiquity of the figure of the tyrant, always scheming against perceived rivals and so inclined to self-serving violence, is a noteworthy feature of Valerius' epic.³⁵ The poem presents the tyrant as the only political being consistently capable of amassing and exploiting power.³⁶ Pelias, who gives this ideologeme its earliest concrete form (1.22–3) is merely the first of a series of such figures in the poem. Others are encountered by the Argonauts at various stages of their journey: Laomedon at Troy, Amycus at Bebrycia, Aeetes at Colchis.³⁷ The multiplication of tyrannical figures is signaled on something like a meta-narrative level by Jason's outburst to Aeetes upon finding himself double-crossed at the beginning of book 7:³⁸

...alium hic Pelian, alia aequora cerno.
quin agite hoc omnes odiisque urgete tyranni
imperiisque caput: numquam mihi dextera nec spes
defuerit. mos iussa pati nec cedere duris.

(V. Fl. 7.92–5)

...I see here another Pelias, another ocean. But come, all you tyrants
vent your hatred and exercise your commands upon my head! Neither

³⁴ The much-discussed *Lex de Imperio*, for example, dispensed with many of the Senate's face-saving formalities in granting imperial power to Vespasian in 69 CE. See further Zissos (2003) 676 n. 59.

³⁵ For the anti-imperial force of such figures, see McGuire (1997) 27–9. For Valerius' intense interest in tyrannical figures—an obsession shared with Seneca and Statius—see Burck (1979a) 245–6; Hull (1979) 404–5. McDonald (1971) sees Valerius' poem as generally supportive of the principate, but offering a veiled critique of the autocratic abuses of Domitian.

³⁶ McGuire (1997) xii–xiii, noting the same pattern in Statius and Silius. Scaffai (1986) 233–61 provides a valuable discussion of Valerius' figure of the tyrant in relation to *inter alia* the philosophical, historiographical, dramatic, and oratorical traditions of the first century CE.

³⁷ These figures are explicitly identified as *tyranni* at 2.577, 4.751, and 5.264. For Laomedon's similarity to Pelias and Aeetes, see Burck (1979a) 245.

³⁸ For the studied parallelism established between Pelias, the principal tyrant of the first half of the epic, and Aeetes, the principal tyrant of the second half, see Burck (1971) 48–50; Adamietz (1976) 7–8; Barich (1982) 102–3.

my right hand nor my hope will fail me: my custom is to obey orders, not to yield to hardships.

By presenting the figure of the tyrant as holding sway in many of the regions visited by its heroes, the *Argonautica* seems to suggest not just the perversity but also the inevitability of the new Roman political order.³⁹ In so doing, it replicates contemporary aristocratic political views in such a way as to provide a historical diagnosis that transcends individual situations and judgments. This effect is enhanced by the surprising number of *sententiae* (which Valerius generally uses very sparingly) associated with the tyrant (e.g., 1.30; 4.158; 5.264–5, 536).⁴⁰ The ideological perspective of the displaced nobility is rhetorically reinforced by the relatively frequent resort to this kind of ethical marker.

Shortly after the medial proem, Valerius opens the Colchian narrative with a précis of local political developments. Here a variation upon the power dynamics seen earlier in Thessaly arises when Perses, half-brother to the Colchian tyrant Aeetes, falls into dispute with the latter. Confronted by much the same dilemma as that faced by Jason and Aeson—acquiescing in tyrannical misdeeds or leading an insurrection—Perses chooses the path of insurrection. Valerius' account of the conflict's early stages reveals that the socio-political composition of Colchis mirrors that in Thessaly: an imperious tyrant, a cowed and ineffectual body of *patres*, a fickle *uulgus*:

³⁹ The tendency to “globalize” autocracy and tyrannical oppression has one noteworthy exception: Lemnos. With trenchant irony, Valerius makes this exclusively female nation the epic's sole terrestrial locus of constitutionality and genuine political process. Following the eradication of the entire male population, the Lemnian women promptly reconstitute the island's political life by convening their “senate” and electing Hypsipyle to her father's throne, a unique depiction of orderly political succession (2.307–10). Hypsipyle responds to the Argonauts' arrival by convening an assembly in which competing views and rival suggestions are aired before Polyxo's suggestion to take advantage of the procreative opportunity made available by the heroes' presence wins the day (2.312–27). This debate features genuine political consultation and collective decision making (*dicta placent*, 2.326, is reminiscent of formulae used of the Roman Senate). The Lemnians appear to have instituted a dyarchy, of the kind theoretically operative in the early principate: its association with this implausible and most un-Roman society produces an estrangement effect that serves to “naturalize” the autocratic forms of governance found virtually everywhere else in the poem. On the Lemnian episode generally in Flavian epic and Apollonius, see Dominik (1997a) 29–50.

⁴⁰ This represents a sizeable fraction of the dozen *sententiae* that Summers (1894) 62 finds in the entire poem. Barich (1982) 24 traces out the differences between Valerius' presentation of the tyrant and the much simpler treatment of the declaimers (for whom the tyrant was of course a stock figure).

...tunc ordine regi
 proximus et frater materno sanguine Perses
 increpitare uirum: sequitur duce turba reperto.
 ille furens ira solio se proripit alto
 praecipitatque patres; ipsum quin talibus ausis
 spem sibi iam rerum uulgi leuitate serentem
 ense petit. rapit inde fugam crudelia Perses
 signa gerens omnemque quatit rumoribus Arcton.
 (V. Fl. 5.265–72)

... then Perses, next in rank to the king and brother on his mother's side, rebukes him: the crowd, having found a leader, follows. But Aeetes in a furious rage springs from his lofty throne, and sends the *patres* scurrying. With the sword he moves against Perses, inasmuch as by such daring ventures he was sowing for himself hopes of power based on support of the fickle populace. Thereupon Perses flees, bearing marks of cruelty, and shakes all the Northern regions with rumors.

By replicating or “globalizing” the essential power equation of the early principate, the *Argonautica* maintains contact with contemporary Roman realities despite the ever-changing narrative locale. It is thereby able to explore a variety of pertinent imperial scenarios. The pattern of events in Colchis rehearses the ever present dangers of dynastic feuding and civil war, with the international character of the strife providing a punctual “Roman” touch. The devastation and ultimate futility of Perses’ rebellion can be seen as retrospectively confirming the wisdom and nobility of Aeson’s (and Jason’s) choice.⁴¹

The Politics of Elysium

I have discussed elsewhere the attempt of the *Argonautica* to “reinvent” a place of prominence for the aristocracy within the collective process of Roman history.⁴² Bound up with that attempt is an idealization of and nostalgia for the *mores* and socio-political formations of the republic, that vanished order in which the aristocracy exercised something close to collective rule. This utopian yearning is exemplified by figures such as Aeson and Hypsipyle who embody cardinal “republican” virtues,

⁴¹ The careful parallelism between the circumstances of Aeson and Perses is reinforced by the fact that both are half-brothers to the tyrant on their mother's side.

⁴² Zissos (2003) 671–2.

not the least of which being self-control.⁴³ The ideological significance of Aeson, a central figure of Valerius' early narrative, can hardly be overstated. Like his son Jason, he undergoes a systematic "recuperation" vis-à-vis earlier versions of the myth.⁴⁴ His selfless refusal to engage in sedition and his courageous suicide have already been mentioned; in addition, Valerius endows him with an impressive heroic past and surpassing paternal *auctoritas*.⁴⁵ Aeson thus embodies many of the traditional ideals of the Roman nobility, a point driven home by an early outburst of paternal pride:

...uideo nostro tot in aequore reges
teque ducem. tales, tales ego ducere suetus
atque sequi."

(V. Fl. 1.342–4)

...I see so many heroes embarking on our sea, and you [Jason] their leader. Such men, such was I accustomed both to lead and to follow.

This enthusiastic remark exemplifies the reciprocal sharing of *gloria* among generations of a *gens* while neatly distilling the essentially oligarchic nature of the aristocracy under the republic: its shared honors, rotating positions of leadership, and the underlying principle of egalitarianism that informed so many of its practices. In more general terms, it might be said that Valerius' choice of an *Argonautica* constitutes an implicit response to the *Aeneid* by affirming the aristocratic principle of a heroic collective, positing a corporate identity and perspective against Vergil's insistence on the one great and preeminent individual. Though Valerius does not go as far as Apollonius in making the Argonauts as a group the composite "hero" of his epic, he nonetheless provides numerous collective depictions.⁴⁶ The Flavian poet has a particular

⁴³ Hershkowitz (1998b) 270. On Hypsipyle, and in particular the authorial address to her at 2.242–6, Vessey (1985) 335 comments that this "is one of a series of allusions to Rome inserted by Valerius into his *Argonautica*, the purpose of which remains obscure.... He seems in a way to be claiming Hypsipyle for Rome, on the basis that her nobility linked her to its vision of heroism...Hypsipyle is the sole example of virtue among the women of Lemnos. The phrase *decus et patriae laus* ("the splendor and glory of her fatherland," 2.243) assimilates her to the Roman ideal of womankind...."

⁴⁴ Hershkowitz (1998b) 128–36 with additional bibliography.

⁴⁵ Fuà (1986) 267–73; Ripoll (1998) 26–30.

⁴⁶ For the group characterization of the Argonauts, see Brooks (1951) 6–10. It must be granted, though, that the focus is for the most part on a small number of prominent individuals, with the other heroes remaining relatively unindividuated. Cf. Garson (1965) 119: "Like the faithful Achaes, almost all of the Argonauts are *just there*" (my italics). On Valerius' limited focus of characterization generally see Adamietz (1976) 120–1; on

tendency to emphasize “group subjectivity” or corporate identity for the Argonauts in moments of high drama or crisis—as with the bouts of collective despair during the sea-storm (1.621–38) and during the death-throes of Tiphys (5.13–34).⁴⁷

It is a measure of the poem’s deep-rooted pessimism that Aeson’s exemplary aristocratic conduct and courageous response to tyrannical oppression find their reward not in this world but the next. Even his aspirations for his youngest son are brutally denied when the latter is slain by imperial executioners before his dying parents’ eyes (1.824–6). Likewise, though Aeson prays for justice to be meted out to Pelias while the tyrant still lives (788–822), that punishment too will be largely deferred to the hereafter (847–8). Aeson’s post mortem *katabasis* (827–50) thus provides the only episode of the early narrative in which “social justice” is served and the aristocracy enjoys a triumphant vindication. The included eschatological exposition begins in Vergilian fashion by identifying two points of entry into the underworld, through the first of which pass peoples and kings:⁴⁸

hic geminae aeternum portae, quarum altera dura
semper lege patens populos regesque receptat;
ast aliam temptare nefas et tendere contra...
(V. Fl. 1.832–4)

Here twin gates stand eternally, of which one is always open by stern decree, and it receives peoples and kings. But to try the other, to strive against it, is forbidden...

It then goes on to identify those deserving few who may enter via the second gate, which leads to Elysium and a blessed afterlife:

rara et sponte patet, siquando pectore ductor
uulnera nota gerens, galeis praefixa rotisque
cui domus aut studium mortales pellere curas,

speech and characterization in Valerius, see Dominik (2002) 186–91. In some instances, the collective depiction of the Argonauts provides an internal audience, a registering device for important narrative events or for the actions of their more conspicuous comrades: see Hershkowitz (1998b) 147; Zissos (2003) 663–6.

⁴⁷ Garson (1965) 119.

⁴⁸ Spaltenstein (2002) 301 understands *populos regesque* to exercise the topos of “death the equalizer” (as with, e.g., Hor. *Carm.* 2.14.11–2: *siue reges/siue inopes erimus coloni*, “whether we be kings or poor tenant farmers”). At the same time, these loaded terms seem to reflect the same class bias that restricts categories of blessedness to activities and professions closely associated with the Roman aristocracy, as discussed below.

culta fides, longe metus atque ignota cupido,
seu uenit in iuttis castaque in ueste sacerdos.

(V. Fl. 1.835–9)

It [the second gate] opens rarely and of its own accord, whenever there comes a general bearing famous wounds on his breast, whose home is affixed with helmets and chariot wheels; or one whose concern was to banish the cares of mortals, who exalted truth, for whom fear was distant and desire unknown; or when there comes a priest in fillets and a pure robe.

In Roman epic the virtuous are conventionally rewarded in the afterlife by admission into Elysium. In the *Aeneid* (6.660–5), Vergil identifies the broad categories of those who merit the blessed abode: soldiers who fought bravely for their country; priests and poet/prophets under the patronage of Apollo; inventors or intellectuals whose discoveries improved the human condition; and, as a vague catch-all, those who have won remembrance through laudable deeds. While in the same general spirit, Valerius' eschatological criteria are redefined so as to take on class connotations. He identifies the following groups of the elect: victorious generals, stoic *proficientes* ("adepts"), and priests. By specifying very broad prerequisites for admission to Elysium, Vergil had made it potentially open to all of humankind. Valerius is more restrictive: admission is predicated upon activities and professions traditionally associated with the Roman aristocracy. It is as if the poem's utopian impulse leads it to posit in the afterlife that "idealized" society of aristocratic privilege and prestige that eludes it in the realm of the living.

Particularly suggestive for a political reading of the epic is the first category of Elysian inductees, *ductores* ("generals") bearing wounds on their breasts, whose homes are affixed with the helmets and chariot wheels of vanquished enemies (1.835–7).⁴⁹ The Roman belief that the exercise of *uirtus* ("martial prowess") on behalf of the state merited post mortem bliss is derived from Stoic as well as Pythagorean eschatology, and is perhaps most famously articulated in Cicero's "Dream of Scipio" (*Rep.* 6.9–29). A similar validation of those wounded in battle

⁴⁹ The association of the good warrior with a wound in the breast is found in poetry from Homer onwards (e.g., *Il.* 8.93–5, 13.275–94; Hor. *Carm.* 3.2.13–6; Ov. *Met.* 13.262–7; Sil. 5.594–8; it is also a commonplace in prose (e.g., Sall. *Iug.* 85.29–30; Liv. 2.23.4). By contrast, the wound in the back, which would typically be sustained in flight, signifies a coward. For Romans, battle scars on the breast constituted an important emblem of military *uirtus*; they were in truth a central trope of the good citizen warrior, and are perhaps less plausibly attributed to generals.

is found at *Aeneid* 6.660: *hic manus ob patriam pugnando uolnera passi* (“here is found the band of those who suffered wounds fighting for the fatherland”). But whereas Vergil counts as blessed all those incurring injury fighting for the fatherland, Valerius restricts this broad category by specifying *ductores*. With *galeis praefixa rotisque/cui domus* (“whose home is affixed with helmets and chariot wheels,” 1.836–7), the poet further bolsters exclusivity by referring to the prized Roman aristocratic custom of affixing military spoils to one’s house. This practice seems to have arisen in the mid-republic, possibly around 300 BCE. Pliny (*Nat.* 35.7) describes numerous thresholds so decorated, thereby memorializing the military glory of generations past. Like the military triumph, it appears to have been disallowed to generals from the early Augustan period onwards.⁵⁰ Valerius’ eschatological criterion has thus been formulated as an ingenious, subtly anti-imperial expression of republican nostalgia.

⁵⁰ Rawson (1990) 154–73. Note that this practice is to be distinguished from that of affixing spoils to public buildings such as temples or the Curia, as described at, e.g., Verg. *Aen.* 7.183–6 and Sil. 1.617–21, the latter a practice which, since it did not exalt individual generals, continued under the principate.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE IVY AND THE CONQUERING BAY: QUINTILIAN ON DOMITIAN AND DOMITIANIC POLICY

Paul Roche

huic uel confinis uel eadem est qua nunc utimur plurimum. iam enim ad id genus quod et frequentissimum est et expectari maxime credo ueniendum est, in quo per quamdam suspicionem quod non dicimus accipi uolumus, non utique contrarium, ut in εἰρωνεία, sed aliud latens et auditori quasi inueniendum.

(Quint. *Inst.* 9.2.65)

Similar to or identical with this is that [rhetorical figure] we use so much today. For now we have come to that device which is so often employed and (I think) is eagerly awaited, in which through a kind of hint, we wish something to be understood that we do not say: not exactly the opposite, as in irony, but something hidden and awaiting discovery, as it were, by the audience.

A sentence is but a chev’ril glove to a good wit—how quickly the wrong side may be turned outward!

(Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night* 3.1.11–2)¹

Few modern readers of the *Institutio Oratoria*, have been satisfied by the sincerity of Quintilian’s appraisal of Domitian.² Somehow the “invariably manly, honourable, and straightforward” voice adopted throughout the treatise seems inherently alien to the easy hyperbole of the rhetorician’s thumb-sketches of his emperor.³ A number of modern studies have attempted to resolve this disparity by arguing the possibility of Quintilian’s dissent from Domitian and the political *mores* of his principate, and have suggested various strategies available to Quintilian of broadcasting an alternate vision of Domitianic Rome while concealing a dissenting voice within the ostensibly complicit politics espoused in the majority of his handbook. Kennedy, for instance, argued for

¹ Lothian and Craik (1975) 74–5.

² McDermott and Orentzel (1979) 9 acknowledged the eccentricity of their own defense of the panegyric.

³ So Peterson (1891) xi, calling the passages on Domitian a stain on Quintilian’s character; cf. Clarke (1967) 35; Cousin (1979) 6.319; Fantham (1996) 173. Cf. Dominik (1997c) 62, who refers to Quintilian’s support of Domitian as “superficial.”

the insincerity of Quintilian's praise because his *magnum opus* was not dedicated to Domitian because (somewhat vaguely) "the nature of these references seems to indicate that Quintilian was not really eager to flatter Domitian, but rather forced into it," and because Quintilian draws attention (*Inst.* 4 *praef.* 5) to the fact that he did not seek out Domitian's favor but had it thrust upon him.⁴ Winterbottom presented a more thoroughgoing response in the *Institutio Oratoria*: the formulation of the orator in Catonian ethical and moral terms was a response to the activities, prominence, and rhetorical style of the *delatores* ("informants")⁵ that Quintilian witnessed under Domitian.⁶ Coleman has also entertained the notion that the imperial tutor did not approve of his emperor, and that the sheer brevity of the passages in which he praises Domitian demonstrates "as far as he was prepared to go in expressing the admiration expected by the regime."⁷ Most recently, Penwill has suggested that Quintilian's assessment of Domitian's poetic talent is ironic and that his inclusion of the emperor in the canon of Latin authors is part of a larger network of satirical responses to Domitian's literary pretensions.⁸ In this chapter I take my lead from this sequence of reservation and consider the extent to which Quintilian's praise of his emperor in the *Institutio Oratoria* can be read as embodying an ironic or satirical response to Domitian's public imagery. I part company with the majority of the arguments presented by my predecessors, partly in terms of methodology—I have tried to allow Quintilian's own codifying of figures and tropes to shed interpretive light upon his comments about Domitian⁹—and partly in emphasis: I concentrate almost exclusively on the relevance of Quintilian's assessment of his emperor's talents to Domitianic foreign and domestic policy in the 80s and 90s.¹⁰

⁴ Kennedy (1962) 133; cf. Kennedy (1969) 110.

⁵ Although for a thorough discussion of the complex phenomenon of *delatores* and delation in the early empire see Rutledge (2001) 3–18; cf. Talbert (1984) 460–87; Jones (1972) 89–118.

⁶ Winterbottom (1964) 90–7; cf. Rutledge's (1999) 555–73 salutary demonstration of the continuity of rhetorical style between republican and imperial *delatores*.

⁷ Coleman (1986) 3110.

⁸ Penwill (2000b) 60–83, discussed below.

⁹ Taking my lead from the *dictum* of Aristarchus, that one should clarify Homer through Homer. In the case of *emphasis*, Ahl (1984a) 174–208 has obviously set the tone and Penwill (2000b) 60–83 has applied it to some aspects of Quintilian's comments about Domitian's poetic endeavors; I discuss it and others below.

¹⁰ That is, I have not dwelled for long on the implications of Quintilian's praise for the poetic talents of his emperor: these are well covered by Penwill (2000b) 60–83.

Some reservations emerge at the outset. The difficulty of trying to view a modern fabrication of an ancient political figure or period through the shifting lens of a modern fabrication of an ancient author and his assumed political inclinations is obvious. The concomitant danger of constructing a reductive apparition of either Quintilian or Domitian to meet one's own political and moral convictions is also flagrant and unavoidable. Domitian's fluctuating stocks in the twentieth century urge caution, and I have tended to play down the re-assessment of Domitian's relationship with the aristocracy argued by a number of scholars to foreground aspects and possibilities of opposition. What I hope emerges at the end will be a case for a more consistent, but perhaps less radical voice than has previously been detected in Quintilian's assessment of his emperor.

Three times and in increasingly inflated terms Quintilian praises Domitian. At *Institutio* 3.7.9 he declares that some men ought to be praised because they have earned immortality by their virtue, a fact which the *pietas principis nostri* ("piety of our emperor") has made the glory of his present age. In the proem to book 4, when he reports to Marcus Vitorius his appointment to the tutelage of Domitian's heirs, Quintilian writes:

quis enim mihi aut mores excolendi sit modus, ut eos non inmerito probauerit sanctissimus censor, aut studia, ne fefellisse in iis uidear principem ut in omnibus, ita in eloquentia quoque eminentissimum?

(Quint. *Inst.* 4 *praef.* 3)

For what limit can I observe in either cultivating my own character—so that our most revered censor might approve it—or learning, lest I should seem in this sphere to have disappointed an emperor who, as in all other things, is most eminent in his eloquence?

Later in the same passage, Quintilian declares that no other divine power looks with greater favor upon learning (4 *praef.* 5). Most famously, in his discussion of appropriate reading material for acquiring *facilitas* ("facility," 10.1.1) Quintilian inserts Domitian into the canon of Latin authors:

hos nominamus quia Germanicum Augustum ab institutis studiis deflexit cura terrarum, parumque dis uisum est esse eum maximum poetarum. quid tamen his ipsis eius operibus in quae donato imperio iuuenis secesserat sublimius, doctius, omnibus denique numeris praestantius? quis enim caneret bella melius quam qui sic gerit? quem praesidentes studiis deae propius audirent? Cui magis suas artis aperiret familiare numen Minerua? dicent haec plenius futura saecula, nunc enim ceterarum fulgore uirtutum

laus ista praestringitur. nos tamen sacra litterarum colentis ferēs, Caesar, si non tacitum hoc praeterimus et Vergiliano certe uersu testamur "...inter uictrices hederam tibi serpere laurus."

(Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.91–2)

I have mentioned these because the governance of the world has diverted Germanicus Augustus from his literary pursuits, and it seemed to the gods too paltry an honor for him to be the greatest of poets. But what could be more sublime, erudite, or more outstanding in every respect than those works which as a youth he withdrew to write after he had delegated the empire? For who could sing of wars better than one who wages them thus? To whom would the goddesses of literature listen more attentively? To whom would Minerva, his familiar deity, more readily reveal her secrets? Future ages will tell of these things more fulsomely; now that praise is eclipsed by the radiance of his other virtues. Nevertheless, Caesar, you will forgive us who worship at the shrine of literature if we do not pass by in silence and insist on testifying that, in Vergil's words, "...the ivy creeps amid your victorious laurel."

In *Institutio* 3 Quintilian had provided a how-to guide to praising and damning the great which included both the living and the dead. He had prefaced this section of his treatise with the potentially conflicting sentiments that encomium is not limited to the honorable (3.4.16) and that it is the orator's duty to praise what is generally agreed to be honorable and to damn what is disgraceful (3.5.3). Quintilian creates an avenue for interpreting these instructions in a contemporary, non-declamatory context by mentioning the emperor himself at 3.7.9. The very nature of epideictic oratory is to amplify and embellish (3.7.6), and the catalogue of strategies at 3.7.1–22 suggest the potential avenues by which any subject might be, as it were, airbrushed into superstardom by an adequately trained orator. A wide variety of subjects—divisible into the mind, the body, and external circumstances (3.7.12)—are at hand in the praising of the great: both strength and weakness (3.7.13); fortune (both good and bad), all things which have come to him by chance (provided he has made good use of them) along with wealth, power, and influence: the surest tests of character (3.7.14). Praise of the mind is true praise. In celebrating the mind, one can either begin with the subject's natural abilities in his first years, his education, and catalogue the whole series of his works in both his deeds and sayings. Otherwise, one can praise according to the virtues of one's subject, listing his virtues and illustrating them by acts performed in accordance with each one (3.7.15). Emphasis should be placed upon deeds which only the subject or only a very few men have done; so too upon anything that exceeds hope or expectation, or anything done altruistically (3.7.16). The versa-

tility and facility of the mode of oratory is on display at 3.7.19: when damning someone, simply take the whole scheme for praise and invert it. The control on the exercise when applied to the living will be the judgment of one's contemporaries. Honor and ignominy will confirm or refute the truth of praise and blame (3.7.22). Quintilian also allows for the substitution of vices and virtues for their opposites. Because of the relation between the virtues and their opposing vices (2.12.4; cf., e.g., Arist. *Rh.* 1.1367a32, *Ethics* 1125a17–34; Demetr. *Eloc.* 114; Hor. *Ars P.* 25–31), one should be prepared to replace evaluative words by their opposites; for example, one could call the foolhardy brave, the prodigal generous, or the miserly thrifty (3.7.25; a classic illustration of this is at Plin. *Pan.* 3.4). The scheme will work both positively and negatively, although the good orator will be reluctant to do this *nisi forte communi utilitate ducetur* (“but for the public interest,” 3.7.25).

One may instinctively baulk at the sincerity of *uera laus* (“true praise,” *Inst.* 3.7.15) within a document which itself codifies the constituent elements of panegyric and provides step-by-step instruction in the assembly of *encomia* for the living and the dead; so too in one which opens the mode's applicability to the honorable and dishonorable alike and lays emphasis upon the versatility of the actual terms employed in praise. On the other hand, it is clear that the correlation between the instructions in book 3 and the actual praise of Domitian throughout the *Institutio Oratoria* bear only limited semblance to each other. Quintilian nowhere allows himself room to demonstrate an extended panegyric of his emperor in the terms he himself suggests. In none of the three passages in which Quintilian refers to Domitian does he raise the topic of the emperor's strength, fortune, chance gifts, wealth, power, or influence in the context suggested in book 3. Rather he restricts himself to the “true praise” of his emperor's mind. Even within this category, clear departures are in evidence. He treats neither Domitian's natural abilities as a child, nor his education; nor does he list any of his specific works in word or deed. He does not praise the emperor's virtues by listing them against acts performed in accordance with each. Rather, Quintilian focuses upon the extraordinary nature and degree of a number of unillustrated qualities. It is significant that if we seek specific examples of the emperor's qualities, we must as readers supply them for ourselves. A point-form reduction of the content of the three passages referring to the emperor to the actual qualities of mind lauded gives the following: a reference to Domitian's *pietas* (3.7.9); his sanctity as censor (4 *praef.* 3); his eminence in eloquence (4 *praef.* 3);

that he looks with favor upon learning (4 *praef.* 5); references to his poetic ability: that he could have been the greatest of poets and that his poetry as a young man was *sublimis* ("sublime"), *doctus* ("erudite") and *praestans* ("outstanding") (10.1.91); and that he is as good at waging wars as he is at writing poetry (10.1.91). If we take as programmatic Quintilian's assertion that praise is a form of advice (3.4.14), it is difficult to see what end the rhetorician has in mind for his emperor in this catalogue of qualities.

A number of linguistic tropes from elsewhere in the *Institutio Oratoria* may point to a subversive undertone informing Quintilian's praise of his emperor. Hyperbole is defined as an exaggeration of the truth which is *decens* ("appropriate," 8.6.67). It can manifest itself (among other avenues) by saying *plus facto* ("more than the facts," 8.6.68) or *per comparationem* ("by comparison," 8.6.69). Quintilian explicitly connects hyperbole to panegyric through his declaration that it resides in the very nature of praise (3.6.7). He describes praise of the mind as "true praise," and yet reminds his readers that hyperbole is a liar:

monere satis est mentiri hyperbolen, nec ita ut mendacio fallere uelit. quo magis intuendum est quo usque deceat extollere quod nobis non creditur. peruenit haec res frequentissime ad risum: qui si captatus est, urbanitatis, sin aliter, stultitiae nomen adsequitur.

(Quint. *Inst.* 8.6.74)

It is enough to warn that hyperbole is a liar, but it does not wish to deceive by its lying. We should therefore consider all the more to what extent it is appropriate to exaggerate something that is incredible. This very frequently results in laughter; if that was aimed at, it is called wit, if otherwise, ineptitude.

At *Institutio* 6.3.67, the satirical potential of hyperbole is also underscored. By ranking the poetic talents of Domitian as evidenced in his twenty-five year old, uncompleted juvenilia with Vergil and the rest of the Latin canon¹¹ and by stressing Domitian's capacity to be the greatest of all the poets, the rhetorician is literally exaggerating something that is not only unexpected but incredible. And Quintilian himself had polarized the two conditions for exaggerating the incredible at 8.6.74: intentional *urbanitas* ("wit")¹² on the one hand, and unintentional *stultitia*

¹¹ *Hos nominamus* ("I nominate these others," Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.91): Vergil, Macer, Lucretius, Varo of Atax, Ennius, Ovid, Cornelius Severus, Seranus, Valerius Flaccus, Saleius Bassus, Rabirius, Peto, and Lucan.

¹² On which see Ross (1969) 104–12; Ramage (1973).

("ineptitude") on the other. Perhaps Quintilian's naked assertion that the author of *De Cura Capillorum* ("On the Care of One's Hair," Suet. *Dom.* 18.2) and an unfinished poem on his own flight from danger during the civil war of 69 could outstrip the talents of Homer or of Vergil should be weighed in this same balance. In the varied responses of modern scholarship to Quintilian's praise of Domitian, no one has yet argued that the rhetorician unintentionally drew this comparison.

If Quintilian's praise is anything other than genuine, further tropes and figures are relevant to his estimate of his emperor. *Simulatio* finds definition and discussion in two places. The trope is introduced in *Institutio* 6, where it is defined as faking an opinion and described as a great source of laughter (*Plurimus autem circa simulationem... risus est... est certam opinionem animi sui imitantis*, "*Simulatio* is the greatest source of laughter... it is faking an opinion of one's own," 6.3.85). In book 9 this figure is explicitly linked with praise (9.2.28) and in this context it is made clear that the figure may be used to appeal to political groups with diametrically opposed interests. The *Pro Ligario* is held up as a classic example of the political dexterity of the figure. Cicero's comments before Caesar regarding his client's and his own opposition during the civil war (Cic. *Lig.* 7, 10) are lauded because *admirabiliter utriusque partis facit bonam causam, sed hoc eum demeretur cuius mala fuerat* ("he succeeds admirably in implying that both sides [namely in the civil war] were in the right, but in doing this he lays under obligation the man whose cause was in the wrong," 9.2.29).

Well-known and utilized, both in Quintilian's day (*Inst.* 9.2.65) and in modern responses to imperial panegyric, is *emphasis* and its close relation, *schema*, or figured speech (9.1.14).¹³ These are devices for layering further, latent meanings beneath the ostensible surface meaning of a text. They are employed when it is unseemly or unsafe to speak openly, or for added elegance and pleasure (9.2.66). The popularity of the figure is repeatedly underscored (9.2.65, 67). Quintilian works hard to de-politicize the practical and political application of figured speech: it is commonly used, but only in declamation schools (9.2.67); it is to be used against *illos tyrannos* ("those tyrants [i.e., the ones treated in declamation topics]," 9.2.67); real life has never yet given rise to the need for the necessity of silence implied by the figure (9.2.68).

¹³ Following Ahl; on the figure see Ahl (1984a) 176–9, 187–97; cf. Bartsch (1994) 67, 93–6; Winkler (1995) 65–7; Penwill (2000b) 73.

But the practical potential of the figure is everywhere on display. The implication of danger at 9.2.66 and the reality of powerful people obstructing cases in which they cannot but be offended (9.2.68) give lie to the notion that its use is confined to the declamation hall and the schools.¹⁴ And of course, to openly assert the practical applicability of the figure in Domitianic Rome would be not only uncharacteristically rash and potentially dangerous, it would constitute a transgression of figured speech in itself.¹⁵ Rather, Quintilian urges that the figure be not overused so that it does not lose its effectiveness (9.2.72–3) and that the orator let the facts speak out for themselves (9.2.71).

If we allow Quintilian the prerogative to demonstrate as well as codify the tropes under discussion,¹⁶ what “real” opinion is being concealed behind the *simulatio*? What latent meaning is there within the figured speech? More importantly, what facts should we allow to speak for themselves? In the majority of the constituent elements of Quintilian’s praise there is a case to be made that a number of policy decisions or aspects of the emperor’s personal intellect and disposition are being subjected to the reader’s attention, and in a manner that suggests ironic, satirical, or critical nuances in the rhetorician’s praise. It is at least on first consideration remarkable that in all cases, the objects of Quintilian’s praise are identical to those prominent within critical responses to Domitian, both in the form of rumors circulating about the emperor during his reign and in the open criticism of the immediate post-Domitianic period. But naturally, this coincidence is facilitated by the unanimously hostile reinterpretation of his principate in the reigns of his immediate successors. And herein lies the disquieting, potential circularity to the methodology to which the modern critic is confined. If every aspect of Domitian’s reign is given (at least in terms of lip-service) fulsome praise during his lifetime (so far as we can tell) and each same aspect is (as far as we can tell) mercilessly pilloried under Nerva and Trajan, it becomes impossible to determine the extent of a particular stance of compliance with or subversion of the “official picture” (assuming that there was one in the sense that we imagine it in first place) in either the Flavian or Trajanic period. This has certainly been an influential phenomenon at work in assess-

¹⁴ See Ahl (1984a) 189–90 for Quintilian on the relevance of figured speech.

¹⁵ Ahl (1984a) 190.

¹⁶ Ahl (1984a) 190 “Quintilian, like most rhetoricians, likes to make the text in which he explains a particular phenomenon an example of its use as well.”

ing Domitian's principate in twentieth-century criticism, and has seen our own constructions of the emperor veering between his (essentially) Flavian and Trajanic incarnations.¹⁷ Nevertheless, since no substantial middle ground has been bequeathed to us in the ancient sources, we must proceed as we can and with what we have. In order to explore the potential for a critical response in Quintilian's praise, then, we must read it against the largely Trajanic construction of Domitian's actions and policy decisions and assume that Trajan institutionalized opposing voices that were contemporaneous with Domitian's reign. At stake is not the historical or empirically "true" version of events. Rather we are looking for any negative presentations of Domitian attending the same qualities ascribed him by Quintilian in order to measure out the possibility that his comments are more duplicitous than has usually been allowed.

Let us begin with the remark that *neque praesentius aliud nec studiis magis propitium numen est* ("no other power looks with greater favor upon learning," *Inst.* 4 *praef.* 5). The context of the praise is the ongoing composition of the *Institutio Oratoria* itself. Quintilian apologizes for making no invocation to Domitian at the outset of his work and presently prays for the emperor to inspire him. If we look for a reflection of the favor Domitian showed upon learning and the production of literature throughout his reign, a number of prominent examples come to hand. Domitian's institution of the Capitoline Games and the *Quinquatria* at Alba (Suet. *Dom.* 4.4, Cass. Dio 67.1.2; cf. Stat. *Silv.* 3.5, 4.2) clearly encouraged the production of poetry and oratory;¹⁸ likewise, and especially, his efforts to restock the burnt-out libraries of Rome (Suet. *Dom.* 20).¹⁹ On this last point, however, it is interesting that Suetonius concedes these efforts only within a larger, opposing context, that Domitian *liberalia studia imperii initio neglexit* ("neglected scholarly endeavor soon after his accession," Suet. *Dom.* 20). So too Pliny implies the denigration of the liberal arts under Domitian if only by celebrating their revival under Trajan: *ut sub te spiritum et sanguinem et patriam receperunt studia!* ("How does learning under you recover its spirit, blood, and fatherland!"), *Pan.* 47.1). Pliny's

¹⁷ On the reformed Domitian: e.g., Jones (1992); Jones (1996); Vinson (1989) 431–50; Jones (1979); Waters (1964) 49–77; Pleckett (1961) 296–315. On Domitian the tyrant: e.g., Williams (1990) 196–211; Bennett (1997) 27–34. Murison (1999) 204 and Wilson (2003) 523–42 provide useful overviews.

¹⁸ Murison (1999) 206–7; Coleman (1986) 3097–1000.

¹⁹ Coleman (1986) 3095–6.

image of *studium* recovering its fatherland is pertinent, for Quintilian's remark may have raised a sardonic smile from those who recalled or objected to Domitian's repeated expulsion of astrologers and his edict banning philosophers from Rome and/or Italy (Tac. *Agr.* 2.2; Plin. *Ep.* 3.11.1, *Pan.* 47.1; Suet. *Dom.* 10.3; Gell. *NA* 15.11.4; Philostr. *VA* 7.8; Cass. Dio 67.13.3).²⁰ A number of prominent intellectuals are known to have suffered exile under these purges. At the beginning of the reign, Dio Chrysostom had been banished and remained absent from Rome during Domitian's principate (Dio Chrys. 13.1).²¹ Epictetus was exiled under the authority of the edict of 93, and Plutarch may also have been expelled at this time or else voluntarily absented himself from Domitianic Rome.²² The production of certain genres of literature could also be a potentially perilous endeavor under Domitian. The emperor destroyed a number of libelous pamphlets defaming prominent persons and punished the authors with *ignominia* ("disgrace," Suet. *Dom.* 8.3).²³ More seriously, the younger Helvidius was executed soon after August 93 for the offensive *allegorical* content of his mythological farce (Suet. *Dom.* 10.3).²⁴ In the same period, Arulenus Rusticus and Herennius Senecio were condemned to death for their respective biographies of Thræsea Paetus and Helvidius Priscus (Tac. *Agr.* 2.1; Plin. *Ep.* 7.19.5; Suet. *Dom.* 10.3; Cass. Dio 67.13.2).²⁵ Furthermore, Hermogenes of Tarsus was executed *propter figuras*—that is, "for the use of figured speech"—in his historical writings (Suet. *Dom.* 10.1); even the slaves who acted as copyists of this work were crucified. In fact, Bauman has suggested that Quintilian illustrates the very nature of figured speech with a quote from Hermogenes' work—*duxi uxorem quae patri placuit* ("I married the wife who pleased my father," 9.2.69)—in which Quintilian has emended the original barb *fratri* ("brother"): a pointed reference

²⁰ Astrologers twice: c. 87 or 89 and 93; philosophers probably in 93: see Jones (1992) 119–24; Sherwin-White (1966) 764–5. Quintilian's objections to those who refuse to participate in the administration of the state, *qui philosophi uocantur* ("who are called philosophers," *Inst.* 11.1.35), need not indicate his approval of Domitian's edict.

²¹ Russell (1992) 4–7.

²² Coleman (1986) 3114; Jones (1971) 25.

²³ Bauman (1974) 167, (1982) 109 n. 132, 121 argues that this *ignominia* took the form of *cognitio* (i.e., a legal examination) under the authority of Domitian's censorship; see also Jones (1996) 74; Coleman (1986) 3112.

²⁴ See Jones (1996) 93–4, (1992) 187; Bauman (1974) 160–1; Sherwin-White (1966) 242–3.

²⁵ See Jones (1992) 187.

to Titus' alleged affair with Domitian's wife (cf. Cass. Dio 66.26.4).²⁶ If this is the case, Quintilian has indeed shown his own mastery of figured speech by celebrating a prominent example of the figure's use against Domitian while re-broadcasting humiliating allegations against the emperor in an area in which he was notoriously sensitive;²⁷ and all in a manner which is perfectly consistent with the figure's own insistence upon deniability (9.2.67). In any case, Quintilian's allusion to the favor Domitian shows to *studium* is possessed of a potentially ironic interpretation. Read against the emperor's replenishing of libraries or his presiding over the Capitoline games, it is clearly consonant with Flavian public imagery. Read against the execution of prominent senatorial authors or the expulsion of philosophers, it acquires an ironic double edge. And it is Domitian himself who facilitated both readings for, as Coleman concluded, the "literature of Domitian's period was determined by two opposing attitudes on the part of the emperor: a concern for literature and a tendency to smother it."²⁸

Quintilian's specific comments regarding Domitian's actual poetic talents—namely, that he could have been the greatest of all poets (*Inst.* 10.1.91) and that his poetry as a young man was *sublimis* ("sublime"), *doctus* ("erudite") and *praestans* ("outstanding," 10.1.91)—have found detailed attention in an important article by Penwill.²⁹ In the present chapter I have been largely free to read the laudatory passages in the *Institutio Oratoria* against a backdrop of Domitianic policy because of the breadth of evidence gathered by Penwill and the sensitivity of his discussion. Penwill well establishes that the fundamental issue at hand is the unfinished, unpublished nature of Domitian's juvenilia, and its apparent unavailability in late-Flavian Rome.³⁰ Quintilian is not alone in omitting any actual samples of his emperor's work in the *Institutio Oratoria*, despite his extravagant praise. Not one of the authors who mentions Domitian's endeavors in this field provide specific evidence for

²⁶ Bauman (1974) 162.

²⁷ Jones (1996) 85. The oath that Domitia is reported to have taken denying her involvement with Titus (Suet. *Titus* 10.2) points to Domitian's taking the allegation very seriously indeed: Murison (1999) 214.

²⁸ Coleman (1986) 3115.

²⁹ Penwill (2000b) 60–83.

³⁰ Although I find unnecessary and unconvincing Penwill's (2000) 75 "inevitable conclusion" that Domitian's poetry had never been written at all and that the emperor found the temptation to pretend that it was in a completed state too strong.

its content.³¹ Penwill argues that Quintilian's comments operate within a larger nexus of reactions to this unfinished material which found expression in the 90s at Rome and which was consistently satirical in tone. In this response, the emperor's fragments are both overhyped in impossibly inflated terms which serve to underscore the insignificance of the actual output of the emperor (if not its outright absence) and satirized by ludicrous comparisons with the key authors of the Latin canon.³²

Quintilian's reference to Domitian's *pietas* (*Inst.* 3.7.9) also acquires a potentially sardonic subtext if read against a number of events, anecdotes, and rumors regarding the emperor which found open expression after his death. Pliny recounts Domitian's decision to condemn Cornelia, the chief Vestal virgin, to be buried alive for *stuprum* ("sexual lewdness," Suet. *Dom.* 8.4; cf. Plin. *Ep.* 4.11.5–14, Cass. Dio 67.3.3), an event most likely belonging to the second half of 89.³³ The decision was made in the emperor's capacity as chief priest *ut qui inlustrari saeculum suum eiusmodi exemplis arbitraretur* ("so that he might make his age famous by an example of this kind," Plin. *Ep.* 4.11.6; cf. *quod pietas principis nostri praesentium quoque temporum decus fecit*, "which the piety of our emperor has made the glory of our present age as well," Quint. *Inst.* 3.7.9).³⁴ Pliny's highly rhetorical account (in which Cornelia figures as a kind of Polyxena) represents the trial and punishment as an abuse of his position as *pontifex maximus*, of the priesthood—dispatched as executioners from Alba (Plin. *Ep.* 4.11.7)—and as an embodiment of Domitian's hypocrisy, whose alleged incest with Julia Titi (along with the abortion he supposedly forced upon her that caused her death) had popularly rendered him guilty of the same charge and worse (Tac. *Hist.* 1.2; Suet. *Dom.* 22.1; Cass. Dio 67.3; Plin. *Pan.* 53; Philostr. *VA* 7.7).³⁵

Rumor also circulated widely regarding Domitian's *pietas* towards his brother. Suetonius recounts his contemplation of usurping the principate

³¹ Penwill (2000b) 68.

³² See Penwill (2000b) 64–6, adducing Mart. 5.5, 8.82, Sil. 3.618–21, and Stat. *Achil.* 1.14–18; cf. also the reading of the *Achilleid* at 69–72, where the possibility is raised that the "unfinished" epic of Statius is a parody of the unfinished attempt of Domitian in which the emperor's activities during the Capitoline war are lampooned obliquely by the subject matter of the poem's story.

³³ Murison (1999) 220; Jones (1996) 78, (1992) 28, 101–2, 189; Stewart (1994) 321–6; Vinson (1989) 431–8; Gsell (1894) 80–1 n. 1.

³⁴ Cf. also Murison (1999) 219.

³⁵ Rumor of the affair may have had its genesis in Vespasian's and Titus' encouragement of dynastic intermarriage between the two: Griffin (2000) 62.

in 79; his doubting the authenticity of Vespasian's will and his allegations of Titus' forgery; his incessant plotting against his brother; his allowing Titus to die; the limited and self-interested honors awarded Titus posthumously; also, interestingly, his use of figured speech to defame Titus in orations and edicts (Suet. *Dom.* 2.3; cf. *Titus* 9.3, Plin. *Pan.* 11.1, Cass. Dio 66.26.2–3). Some of these rumors seem to have been prominent and damaging enough in Titus' reign to draw an official response upon coin-issues advertising the *CONCORDIA*³⁶ and *PIETAS AUGUSTA*,³⁷ which bound the brothers to each other. Pliny more generally speaks of the perversion of *pietas* embodied in Domitian's suborning of slaves against their masters (*Pan.* 42.2–4). He also lambastes Domitian for his unrestrained dedication of gold and silver statues of himself in temples (*Pan.* 52.3); again, the incestuous affair of the *princeps* is the point: his statues pollute the images of the gods. In fact, Domitian executed the consular senator L. Salvius Otho Cocceianus in the early 90s precisely for exhibiting *pietas* towards his deceased uncle, the emperor Otho (Suet. *Dom.* 10.2),³⁸ and he had condemned to death his own kinsmen Flavius Sabinus and Flavius Clemens (the latter after the publication of the *Institutio Oratoria* (Suet. *Dom.* 10.2, 15.1; Plin. *Pan.* 48.3; Cass. Dio 67.14.1).

Quintilian's reference to Domitian as *sanctissimus censor* ("most sacred censor," *Inst.* 4 *praef.* 3) is also potentially charged with ironic resonances. The emperor's assumption in 85 of the title *censor perpetuus* as well as his ongoing and enthusiastic promotion of his role in this capacity is one of the defining characteristics of his principate.³⁹ Moreover, Domitian seems to have presented his actions as censor in predominantly moralizing, corrective and disciplinary contexts (cf., e.g., Stat. *Silv.* 4.3.11–2, 5.1.121–2, 5.2.91; Mart. 9.28; Suet. *Dom.* 7.2, 8.3, 14.2; Philostr. *VA* 6.42, *VS* 1.21, 520).⁴⁰ Within this larger program of morally corrective legislature, sexual morality seems to have received special emphasis. Domitian is most famous in his role as censor for his renewal of the Augustan law against adultery (the *Lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis*) in 89

³⁶ BMC 2 no. 273.

³⁷ BMC 2 no. 177.

³⁸ See Roche (2003) 319–22 for discussion.

³⁹ For the date of the censorship and its promotion: Buttrey (1975) 26–34. For censorship as a defining feature of Domitian's principate: Griffin (2000) 83. For the broader Flavian attitude to the office: Jones (1972).

⁴⁰ Cf. Griffin (2000) 79; Jones (1996) 73–4; Coleman (1988) 107; Patterson (1987) 117; Wallace-Hadrill (1983) 134; Levick (1982) 66–73; Duncan-Jones (1982) 35 n. 4.

and his enforcement of the law against homosexual intercourse with free-born boys (the *Lex Scantinia*; Suet. *Dom.* 8.3).⁴¹ The revival and enforcement of the former law gave rise to one of the most enduring criticisms of the emperor in the period following his assassination: his hypocrisy, in the incestuous adultery he was widely rumored to have enjoyed with his niece. And this critical response need not be solely posthumous. Garthwaite has explored some of the contemporary resonances of this charge in book 6 of Martial's *Epigrams*, published most likely in March 91.⁴² Quintilian's superlative appellation *sanctissimus* may be the sincere applause of someone who genuinely approved of the emperor's (self-consciously espoused) old-school morality and his "hands-on" approach to improving the moral fiber of Rome. On the other hand, it may as readily be construed as an ironic innuendo regarding Domitian's allegedly hypocritical and easy-going transgression of his own public facade of stern disapproval, as embodied in his program of moral legislature or in his punishment of the Vestals.⁴³

Quintilian's estimate of Domitian, that he was *in eloquentia... eminentissimus* ("most outstanding...in his eloquence," *Inst.* 4 *praef.* 3; cf. *Sil.* 3.618–21) is in keeping with the ancient view that *eloquentia* was something both fundamentally important to the emperor and to be practiced by the *princeps* himself (*Tac. Ann.* 13.3.2; Fronto, *De Eloquentia* 2.7, *Ad M. Caes.* 3.1, *Ad Verum Imp.* 2.1.9; Cass. Dio 61.3.1). Millar has surveyed the emperor's eloquence in the first two centuries of principate and has drawn the conclusion that the ability to write and deliver one's own speeches was a significant factor in the credibility and reputation of any individual emperor in this period.⁴⁴ But Quintilian's estimate of Domitian's own eloquence is undermined by Suetonius' assertion (true or not) that *epistulas orationesque et edicta alieno formabat ingenio* ("his epistles, speeches, and edicts were composed for the emperor by other parties," Suet. *Dom.* 20.1).⁴⁵ The importance of the allegation (and

⁴¹ See Jones (1996) 76; Garthwaite (1990) 13–22.

⁴² Coleman (2002) 320, building upon Citroni (1989) 201–26.

⁴³ Or in any of the anecdotes pointing up or inventing Domitian's sexual *mores* (e.g., Suet. *Dom.* 22.1; Mart. 11.7.1–4; Cass. Dio 67.6.3; Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 11.2); an inevitable hostile response to this public face.

⁴⁴ Millar (1977) 205; hence the noteworthiness of Senecan authorship for Nero's speeches in 54, despite the emperor's age (17) and lack of experience: *Tac. Ann.* 13.3.2; Cass. Dio 61.3.2.

⁴⁵ See Jones (1996) 145; Millar (1977) 203–7.

therefore its inclusion in Suetonius' biography) may well have been its novelty. Domitian may have been alone of the Flavian emperors in outsourcing the composition of his speeches.⁴⁶ Still, Suetonius explicitly preserves two of Domitian's *bons mots*:

sermonis tamen nec inelegantis, dictorum interdum etiam notabilium: "uellem," inquit, "tam formosus esse, quam Maecius sibi uidetur;" et cuiusdam caput uarietate capilli subrutilum et incanum perfusam niuem mulso dixit.

(Suet. *Dom.* 20.1)

But he was not inelegant of speech, and one or two of his sayings are even noteworthy. He once said, "I wish I were as beautiful as Maecius thinks he is," and called someone's graying red hair "snow mixed with mead."

Others are on record: his paradox that no-one believed an emperor's suspicions of conspiracy unless he had been killed by one (Suet. *Dom.* 21); his maxim that the *princeps qui delatores non castigat, irritat* ("the emperor who does not punish informants encourages them," Suet. *Dom.* 9.3; cf. Cass. Dio 67.1.4);⁴⁷ and his defense of senatorial executions, τοὺς αὐτοκράτορας τοὺς μὴ πολλοὺς κολάζοντας οὐκ ἀγαθοὺς ἀλλ' εὐτυχεῖς εἶναι ("those emperors who did not execute many were not good, just lucky," Cass. Dio 67.2.3).⁴⁸ It is noteworthy, however, that Quintilian himself provides no specific example of Domitian's eloquence to substantiate his claim; and this despite citing or quoting the positive contributions, achievements, and influences of a number of other emperors.⁴⁹

The declaration that Domitian was as good at writing poetry as he was at waging wars (*Quis enim caneret bella melius quam qui sic gerit?*, "For who could sing of wars better than he who wages them so well?", *Inst.* 10.1.91) is remarkable for touching upon one of the most self-conscious

⁴⁶ Suet. *Titus* 6.1 (cf. Cass. Dio 66.10.6) records that Titus delivered Vespasian's speeches when the latter was infirm. Of course, Suetonius had no interest in defaming the *eloquentia* of first two Flavians, but the force of his allegation against Domitian loses point if the same noteworthy charge was commonly applied to Vespasian and Titus.

⁴⁷ Cf. Murison (1999) 209 and the alternative suggestion of Vigorita (1984) 199 n. 38, that the phrase means "the emperor who does not rein in informers, causes offence."

⁴⁸ Perhaps a dig at Titus; see Murison (1999) 211 for discussion.

⁴⁹ Augustus: 1.6.19, 1.7.22, 6.3.59, 6.3.63, 6.3.77, 6.3.79, 6.3.95, 8.3.34, 12.6.1; perhaps Gaius: 1.7.21 (or else the dictator); Claudius: 1.7.26.

and criticized aspects of the emperor's personality and principate.⁵⁰ Both Vespasian and Titus were generals of the first order (e.g., Tac. *Hist.* 2.5, 5.1) and Domitian was particularly keen to establish his own ability in this sphere of activity.⁵¹ Twice before his accession he had been dissuaded from undertaking commands against foreign enemies and the sources paint these as unnecessary attempts to increase his own *dignitas* (Suet. *Dom.* 2.1–2).⁵² A number of wars undertaken by Domitian during his principate were painted as equivocal in their outcome, were unpopular with senior military advisors, or were otherwise maligned by those who survived the emperor. Typical is the comment preserved in Orosius, that Domitian remained in Rome to slay the innocent while his generals waged calamitous wars on his behalf (7.10.3). By the conclusion of his first war against the Chatti (82/3),⁵³ Domitian had accepted extravagant honors: four additional imperatorial salutations,⁵⁴ the title *Germanicus*, and a triumph (Tac. *Agr.* 39.2; Stat. *Theb.* 1.18; Suet. *Dom.* 13.3; Cass. Dio 67.4.4). Tacitus poured derision upon the celebrations: Domitian felt conscious of the ridicule of his sham-triumph (*Agr.* 39.2); the Germans had been more triumphed over than conquered (*Germ.* 37). Cassius Dio also claimed that Domitian returned from the front having never seen actual hostilities (67.4.1). In Britain, Domitian's enormously unpopular decision⁵⁵ to withdraw the Roman frontier 120 kilometers south of Inchtuthil was "officially" glossed over by the construction of a triumphal arch at Richborough.⁵⁶ Tacitus again preserves an alternate view of the policy: *perdomita Britannia et statim omissa* ("Britain, utterly subjugated, was immediately abandoned," *Hist.* 1.2).⁵⁷ The emperor also had equivocal success though unpopular policy decisions in Dacia.⁵⁸ After the death of the governor, Oppius

⁵⁰ Penwill (2000b) 68–9 links this question with Domitian's actions on the Capitoline in 69, but this is unlikely: they seem more naturally to be taken in the broader context of Domitianic foreign policy; cf. also Coleman (1986) 3090.

⁵¹ Jones (1992) 126; Murison (1985) 33; Millar (1982) 22.

⁵² Jones (1996) 20 notes that five (or six) of Domitian's family had commanded legions in battle.

⁵³ On the war against the Chatti: Jones (1992) 128–31; Syme (1936) 162–8. On the date: Jones (1973) 79–90 with references; Evans (1975) 121–4; Evans (1978) 102–28.

⁵⁴ *CIL* 3.1962–3. Syme (1936) 164: some of these imperial may derive from Britain or Mauretania.

⁵⁵ See Jones (1992) 133–4, who connects the execution of the governor, Sallustius Lucullus, with this policy.

⁵⁶ Jones (1992) 131–5. On the arch: Hobley (1989) 73; Strong (1968) 73.

⁵⁷ See Chilver (1979) 40–1.

⁵⁸ Jones (1992) 138–9, 141–3; Syme (1936) 168–72.

Sabinus, command was entrusted to an equestrian, the praetorian prefect Cornelius Fuscus. Pliny seems later to have alluded to this decision in the blackest possible terms, describing the disgraceful scene in which the emperor followed the command of a man of lower status, as though a prisoner (*Pan.* 82.3). Domitian triumphed following Fuscus' initial success in the region (Suet. *Dom.* 6.2). In the second campaign, Fuscus was killed (Suet. *Dom.* 6.1). Perhaps the legion *V Alaudae* was also lost and its standards captured (Cass. Dio 67.6.3, 5).⁵⁹ Tacitus writes of *tot exercitus in Moesia Daciaque et Germania et Pannonia temeritate aut per ignauiam ducum amissi* ("so many armies in Moesia, Dacia, Germany, Pannonia lost through the rashness or cowardice of our generals," *Agr.* 41).⁶⁰ In Africa, the Nasamones and other tribes inflicted defeat upon Cn. Suellius Flaccus (Cass. Dio 67.4.6–7).⁶¹ The miscarried military revolt of Saturninus in 89 was largely the result of the dissatisfaction of German senatorial officers with Domitianic policies, including the immensely unpopular decision to pay compensation to certain German tribes during the war against the Chatti (Plin. *Pan.* 16.3; Tac. *Germ.* 37; Front. *Strat.* 2.11.7).⁶² The Pannonian wars spanned three campaigns across seven years.⁶³ In the first, Domitian repeatedly rejected the peaceful overtures of the Marcomanni before suffering defeat at their hands (Cass. Dio 67.7.1–2): a settlement was granted to them in order to terminate the war (Plin. *Pan.* 11.4). In the second campaign, Domitian again initiated the hostilities only to suffer greater loss in the destruction of the legion *XXI Rapax* (Suet. *Dom.* 6; Tac. *Agr.* 41; Eutr. 7.23.4); but the emperor celebrated an ovation in Rome in January 93. At the end of his reign, there is evidence to suggest that a successful outcome in Pannonia was still eluding the emperor, to judge from ongoing campaigns in the region.

The disparity between the military achievements (however respectable) of Domitian's reign and the military honors he accepted is clear:

He managed to acquire twenty-three imperial salutations, more than Augustus or Vespasian had taken in the course of their long lives. And whereas Vespasian, like Claudius (the first reigning princeps to celebrate

⁵⁹ This is disputed: see Jones (1992) 138; Mócsy (1974) 82; Wilkes (1983) 279 n. 42; Syme (1936) 171 n. 1.

⁶⁰ Fuscus lies behind the phrase *temeritate... ducum*: cf. Tac. *Hist.* 2.86.

⁶¹ Jones (1992) 139–41.

⁶² Jones (1992) 144–9.

⁶³ Jones (1992) 150–5; Syme (1936) 175–8.

a triumph), had limited himself to one, Domitian celebrated at least two triumphs and perhaps four.⁶⁴

The question, then, is which of the emperor's pretensions in Quintilian's comparison deflates the other? His comparison of Domitianic foreign policy and campaigns in Germany, Britain, Africa and the Danube over fourteen years with an unfinished and apparently unread poem written by the adolescent *princeps* (when he had been excluded from participation in the new administration)? Or are the emperor's literary pretensions exposed by comparison with the problematic track-record of an emperor who was deeply self-conscious about proving himself equal to the reputation of his family?

In each of the constituent elements of Quintilian's praise, there is a case to be made that the facts and contemporary reception of Domitian's own principate conspire against the rhetorician's ostensible intent to celebrate his emperor. Each individual element within Quintilian's praise allows its reader to be drawn into a broad nexus of allusions to rumors, allegations, and critical responses to Domitianic policy. Viewed through the negative reception of Domitian's principate, Quintilian's hyperbole frequently assumes nuances of cool and ironic innuendo. And this is utterly in step with Quintilian's own *dictum* that in figured speech *res ipsae perducant iudicem ad suspicionem, et amoliamur cetera ut hoc solum supersit* ("the facts of the matter must be allowed to arouse the suspicion of the judge, and all other factors must be discarded so that this point alone remains," 9.2.71). Of course there are other possibilities to account for the coincidence of subject matter in Quintilian's praise and the critical responses to Domitian's principate. Quintilian may genuinely defend his emperor against other dissenting voices by praising Domitian in precisely those aspects of policy in which there was some debate. His praise might be self-consciously styled and hyperbolic—it may be patently unbelievable—but this lip-service may have been all that was (perceived to be) required from the emperor.⁶⁵ But these and other alternatives, again, are in keeping with figured speech's emphasis upon deniability: *quamlibet enim apertum, quod modo et aliter intellegi possit, in illos tyrannos bene dixeris, quia periculum tantum, non etiam offensa uitatur* ("For you can speak as openly as you like against those tyrants, provided that what you say can be interpreted two ways, because it is only danger,

⁶⁴ Griffin (2000) 63.

⁶⁵ Pace, e.g., Kennedy (1962) 133; Coleman (1986) 3110.

not offense that is to be avoided,” 9.2.67). Domitian’s own sensitivity to figured speech, indeed his own use of it against Titus (Suet. *Dom.* 2.3) and his willingness to punish those who would employ it in politically charged contexts (*Dom.* 10.1) required from Quintilian the utmost care in his explanation, illustration, and use of the trope throughout the *Institutio Oratoria*. The very nature of the smoke-screen of figured speech guarantees that it cannot definitively be uncovered or categorized—now or then—by third parties. But this is its point and power: the mere fact of its existence in Domitianic Rome—a fact advertised and celebrated by Quintilian—is a defiant gesture in the face of self-conscious and self-styled autocracy; for it is a trenchant demonstration that “meaning, like power, is not stable or fixed, and that even power cannot guarantee a tyranny of meaning.”⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Young (1991) 238. I gratefully acknowledge the support of the University of Otago Research Committee by means of a University of Otago Bridging Grant in the preparation of this research.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

STATIUS' SELF-CONSCIOUS POETICS: HEXAMETER ON HEXAMETER

Carole E. Newlands

Ironically literary criticism of Statius' poetry has generated its own kind of civil war, so vigorously have critics been divided over whether the *Thebaid* has any meaningful relationship to imperial politics.¹ One approach to this controversy lies in Statius' *Silvae*, which provide a significant interpretive guide to the epic. The first published collection of *Silvae* (books 1–3) were written as composition of the *Thebaid* was drawing to a close (*Silv.* 1 *praef.* 6–7).² Several of these poems offer self-conscious reflections on both the *Thebaid* and the *Achilleid*.³ Indeed, as I shall argue in this essay, in the *Silvae* literary criticism and socio-political criticism are intertwined.

Of course, the *Silvae* have often been dismissed as overblown praise poems without political or indeed literary substance; Statius was in the pocket of the emperor and the wealthy elite.⁴ To the contrary, Ahl and

¹ Critics have taken the apolitical position that the epic concerns universal ideas: e.g., Schetter (1960) 125; Franchet D'Espérey (1999). Vessey (1982) 578 claims that the *Thebaid* "was given an additional level of universality. It was also a surrender to dogma." For the contrary view that the poem is intimately concerned with imperial politics: Ahl (1986) 2803–912; Dominik (1990) 74–97; Dominik (1994a) 130–80; Dominik (2005) 522–4; Henderson (1991) 30–80; Henderson (1993) 162–91; McGuire (1997) *passim*. Ganiban (2007) has now argued that, since historical opinion on Domitian's reign is itself divided, we can more fruitfully understand the *Thebaid* as engaging in a fundamental dialogue with Virgil's *Aeneid* and its ideas of kingship. But this excludes the important role of Ovid and Lucan in the development of political and literary ideology about the principate. For a survey of criticism on the *Thebaid* since the 1950s, see Dominik (1996c) 129–42; also Coleman (2003c) 9–37.

² *Silvae* 1–3 were probably published after January 93, the *Thebaid* shortly before. See Coleman (1988) xvi–xvii; Hardie (1983) 64–5.

³ Taisne (1996) 226 nn. 38–9 lists all the passages in the *Silvae* in which direct reference is made to the *Thebaid* and *Achilleid*. Taisne (1996) 226–31 notes that Statius also alludes frequently to the themes and heroes from these epics. See also Vessey (1973) 41–4. Malamud (1995) 1–30 reads *Silv.* 2.7, Statius' poem on Lucan, as an indirect but sustained allusion to the *Thebaid*. McNelis (2007) 21 argues that the *Silvae* are fundamental for understanding the epic: "The *Silvae* regularly comment upon the production of the epic, and they do so in a manner that characterizes the epic in Callimachean terms."

⁴ Thus Vessey (1982) 563: "Domitian showed marks of favour to one who so deftly expressed official propaganda under a dazzling veil of verbal conceits." See also

Garthwaite argued that Statius' poems praising Domitian, *Silvae* 1.1 and 3.4, are not flattering panegyrics but rather skilful attacks on the emperor through the subtle medium of "figured speech," the rhetoric of survival in court society. Yet their views have not met with general acceptance.⁵ Rather, the *Silvae* are often seen as escapist praise poetry, the very title evoking the luxury parks of the rich and the sheltered enclave of the Muses.⁶ Praise, however, is often wrongly equated with flattery. In Roman society praise had traditionally an exemplary and protreptic function (Cic. *De Or.* 333; 347–9; Quint. *Inst.* 3.7.33–5).⁷ When the younger Pliny wrote his *Panegyricus*, praise of the emperor reflected an ideal of imperial virtue designed to guide and inspire Trajan in proper leadership. Similarly, the *Silvae* use praise as a vehicle for anxiety as well as hope, criticism as well as glorification. As praise poetry, the *Silvae* are grounded in Roman society, in Roman values, and in Roman anxieties.

Moreover, to think of Statius as a court flatterer does not accurately reflect the breadth of his social circle and the nuances of his relationship with the emperor.⁸ In the *Silvae* Statius walked a fine line between celebration and critique, seeking fame amidst a wide social circle ranging from the urban prefect Rutilius Gallicus to the reclusive Neapolitan, Pollius Felix. None of the books of the *Silvae* is dedicated to Domitian. Moreover, only one of the three dedicatees for the first three books of the *Silvae* was invested in the ladder of career politics in Rome; the other two had rejected public life.⁹ Only two poems of the eighteen in the first collection of *Silvae* are directly addressed to the emperor (1.1 and 1.6), and these poems reveal Statius' experimentation with new forms

Shackleton Bailey (2003) 3: "With a property at Alba and the support of the emperor and wealthy patrons, Statius was assuredly no pauper."

⁵ Ahl (1984b) 40–111; see also Ahl (1984a) 174–208; Garthwaite (1984) 111–24; *contra* Geyssen (1996).

⁶ Delarue (1996) 283–96; Vessey (1982) 562 argues that in many ways the *Silvae* portray "an unreal, exotic world."

⁷ Cf. Braund (1998) 66–8.

⁸ Hardie (1983) 68.

⁹ Book 1 is dedicated to Arruntius Stella, an upcoming senator: see White (1975) 267–72; Hardie (1983) 68; Nauta (2002) 211–12. Book 2 is dedicated to Atedius Melior, a wealthy retiree whose withdrawal from public life may have been politically motivated: see White (1975) 272–5; Nauta (2002) 226–7. Book 3 is dedicated to Pollius Felix, a wealthy businessman living in retirement in his villa outside Surrentum; Statius stresses his Hellenism: see Hardie (1983) 67–8; Nauta (2002) 222–3, 238–9.

of expression to describe imperial power.¹⁰ Indeed, Statius' practice of literary self-criticism forms a crucial part of the poet's *audaciam stili* ("boldness of style," 3 *praef.* 4) as he reflects upon the competing literary and political ideologies of the *Thebaid* and *Silvae*.

From the vantage point of Statius' privileged reading of his own epic, the *Thebaid* emerges as a work of political and cultural importance and tragic scope.¹¹ The poet reveals both anguish and pride over this monumental but tortured poem. Writing his occasional poetry is represented by contrast as a therapeutic activity, a welcome release from writing epic that allows the poet to reaffirm important moral and cultural values that collapse in the mayhem of Thebes; indeed they place high value on social relationships outside the powerful nexus of emperor and court and apart from the struggle for *nuda potestas* ("sheer power," *Theb.* 1.150). Yet the *Silvae* are not escapist literature. By looking in particular at three poems, *Silvae* 1.5, 3.2 and 3.5, I shall argue that the *Silvae*, through dialogue with the *Thebaid*, confront the vexed question of whether imperial poetry can have a meaningful social and political role in Domitian's Rome.

Arma Nocentia

Underlying *Silvae* 1.5, a poem celebrating the new private baths of a rich young man, Claudius Etruscus, was a difficult political situation; Etruscus' father, treasurer to Domitian and an imperial servant from the time of Tiberius, had been exiled by the emperor for reasons about which we can only speculate.¹² Statius does not confront the matter of the father's exile directly. Rather, his *Thebaid* provides a language for political as well as literary discourse; the theme of banishment is introduced through his epic.

The first half of the poem (1–30) establishes the poet's control over poetic and architectural space. Statius represents himself as lyric poet and master of ceremonies over a symposium. Temporarily estranged

¹⁰ Domitian is referred to also in *Silvae* 1.4, 2.5, 3.2 and 3.4. Book 4 opens with three poems of imperial praise.

¹¹ On the poem's close links with Senecan tragedy and philosophical thought, see particularly Frings (1991); Delarue (2000) 141–76.

¹² On Etruscus' father see White (1975) 275–9; Weaver (1965) 145–54. *Silv.* 3.3 and Mart. 6.83, 7.40 are our main sources for the father's career. The son's baths are praised also in Mart. 6.42. For further discussion of *Silvae* 1.5 see Newlands (2002b) 199–226.

from the pain and excess of his epic, he asserts control over his new style of poetry by banishing the chief deities of the *Thebaid*:

non Helicon graui pulsat chelys enthea plectro
nec lassata uoco totiens mihi numina Musas;
et te, Phoebe, choris et te dimittimus, Euhan;
tu quoque muta ferae, uolucer Tegeae, sonorae
terga premas; alios poscunt mea carmina coetus.

(Stat. *Silv.* 1.5.1–5)¹³

My frenzied lyre does not pound upon Helicon with heavy plectrum, nor do I summon my Muses worn out so many times; you too Phoebus, and you, Bacchus, we dismiss from our company; you also, swift Mercury, make the back of your tuneful beast silent; my songs demand other gatherings.

Apollo and Bacchus, gods of poetry and also civic deities of Thebes and Argos respectively, are dismissed as sources of inspiration along with Mercury, the deity who brought Laius to the upper world, there to infect Eteocles with the madness of fratricidal hate (*Theb.* 2.1–133).¹⁴ The personifications *Laborque/Curaque* (“Labor and Care,” *Silv.* 1.5.11–12) are rejected too along with the predatory nymphs Salmacis, Oenone, and the ravishers of Hylas (19–22); instead he summons Roman nymphs of the aqueduct (23–31). Statius is writing in a spirit of fun, of course, on a festive occasion. Yet by banishing harmful deities from his poem and from the baths, he promotes a new exclusive aesthetic in which seclusion from the unpredictable outside world, moral decorum and artistic splendor are important elements. Indeed, the poetics of exclusion are complemented by architectural exclusivity; only the best materials adorn the baths (33–5). Through a *recusatio* that takes up the first half of the poem (1–30) Statius can play benevolent emperor for Etruscus.

In *Silvae* 1.5 Statius opposes the different ideologies of the *Thebaid* and the *Silvae* to elevate the son’s choice of a life removed from imperial politics. From the perspective of the poet temporarily at play, the *Thebaid* is a violent, extravagant work whose topic demands excess from Statius. As epic poet he beats hard upon Helicon, like Oedipus at the epic’s start beating the ground with his bloody hands (*pulsat*, “he beats,” *Theb.* 1.55); he wears out the Muses as he himself with epic ambition becomes infected with the poem’s violence. From Statius’ new lyric perspective, his Theban epic is associated with uncontrollable forces;

¹³ All references to the *Silvae* are to the text of Courtney (1992).

¹⁴ See Feeney (1991) 364–76 on the circumscription of the gods’ roles in the *Thebaid*.

the lyre is *entheia* ("frenzied"), its tortoise shell described as the back of a tuneful *ferae* ("beast," *Silv.* 1.5.4). The theme of the *Thebaid* is starkly described as *arma nocentia*—harmful, not glorious warfare:

paulum arma nocentia, Thebae,
ponite; dilecto uolo lasciuiare sodali.

(Stat. *Silv.* 1.5.8–9)

Set aside for a while your harmful arms, Thebes; I wish to play with
abandon for a beloved friend.

Through the modification by *nocentia* of *arma*, the first word of the *Aeneid*, Statius with characteristic ambivalence suggests his epic's innovative undermining of conventional epic categories: a poem in the grand epic tradition and a deviation from it, for warfare here is a matter of relentless evil, not a source of national pride. Indeed the *Thebaid* offers a radical critique of epic conventions, revealing the semantic instability of concepts such as "glory" and "honor" through a rhetoric of excess and shock. Statius' complicity with the violence of the *Thebaid*, a poem whose theme sets "no limit to human madness and suffering" (*nec furis... modum*, *Theb.* 1.35), is countered by the limits he now sets to his new poetic endeavor; to describe the architectural splendors of Etruscus' new baths in Rome, Vulcan and the nymphs will be *elicuisse satis* ("enough to have invoked," *Silv.* 1.5.8), and his Theban Muse, Clio, invoked in the epic's proem (*Theb.* 1.41) to introduce the Theban Seven, first of all Tydeus, *inmodicum irae* ("uncontrolled in wrath," 41), now *ludit Etrusco* ("plays for Etruscus," *Silv.* 1.5.14). Play functions as an act of friendship, cementing the social and cultural bonds that in the world of the *Thebaid* are so tragically shattered, and promoting new moral and aesthetic values. Affection for a valued friend and the desire for beauty and pleasure remove the poet temporarily from the ambitious endeavor of his great but devastatingly violent poem.

Statius obliquely acknowledges the family's fall in political fortune at the poem's end with his veiled expression of hope for the father's recall:

macte oro, nitenti
ingenio curaque puer! tecum ista senescant
et tua iam melius discat fortuna renasci.

(Stat. *Silv.* 1.5.63–5)

May blessings fall, I pray, on your brilliance and finesse, young man!
May these baths grow old with you and may your fortune soon learn of
a better rebirth.

The final, emphatic word *renasci* (65) contrasts sharply with *lassatas* (“worn out,” 2), the word used to describe the Theban Muses immersed in violent toil.¹⁵ The image of rebirth reflects back upon the baths, which as the site of purification and cleansing retrospectively assume symbolic meaning as a metonym for the virtuous life, free from need-less anxiety and toil and sudden shifts in fortune, a life made possible by disassociation from imperial politics, even though as *puer* (“a young man,” 64) Claudius Etruscus was at the stage of life for involvement in a public career.

In *Silvae* 1.5 Statius asserts control over exile, choosing whom he permits in his poem and whom to banish, even as he draws attention to the limited range of his authority and social role in this private world. The baths both epitomize the splendors of imperial Rome and represent a refuge from the turbulent politics of the imperial court. From the vantage point of the symposium, the *Thebaid* appears as an important if harrowing work, an implicit reminder of the instability of power and of the suffering in the world of grand affairs. For these reasons, and since the plot of the poem hinges on political exile, the epic is rightly banished from *Silvae* 1.5. The poem’s metaliterary tension between epic grandeur and ambition and lyric playfulness and cultured withdrawal encompasses the tension between Thebes and Rome. In opposition to Thebes, city of civic dissolution and perverse militarism, Statius selectively rewrites Claudius Etruscus’ Rome as a city where architecture replaces *arma* as a source of inspiration. Thus the very act of excluding the *Thebaid* from celebration of Etruscus draws attention to the political and aesthetic necessity of doing so.

Closures

In *Silvae* 1.5.11–12 Statius banishes *Labor Curaque* (“Labor and Care”) from his poem. These are the hallmarks of epic composition for the *Thebaid*. Thus in *Silvae* 3.2 Statius describes his epic poem as *laboratas* (“belabored”), claiming that its ending has required particular effort:¹⁶

¹⁵ Cf. *Silv.* 3.3, where Statius refers to Etruscus’ prayers *pro patre renato* (“for the father reborn,” 154) with reference to his return from exile.

¹⁶ See Vessey (1973) 42: “The decision how to end it will not be made hastily.”

...ast ego deuictis dederim quae busta Pelasgis
 quaeue laboratas claudat mihi pagina Thebas.

(Stat. *Silv.* 3.2.142–3)

...but I on the other hand will tell of the graves I gave to the defeated
 Pelasgians, and of the page that closes my belabored Thebes.

As Laguna notes, the adjective *laboratas* (“belabored,” 143) points to the Callimachean ideals that provocatively underpin Statius’ epic, suggesting the meticulous care with which Statius wrote his epic and its complex generic allegiances.¹⁷ The Callimachean ideals implicit in *laboratas* are wittily reinforced by the brevity of the reference;¹⁸ the epic is reduced in this poem to a two line coda.¹⁹ Yet “labor” is also an ambiguous concept, suggestive both of the effort involved in the poem’s composition and also of its emphasis upon suffering, not glory. Indeed, these two lines are rich in significance for our understanding of the epic’s close.

As Hardie comments, the *Thebaid* is after all one of the few classical epics that has “any claim to represent the considered and polished last thoughts” of its author.²⁰ Critical interpretations of the epic’s ending have varied. The optimistic view regards Theseus as a figure influenced by Stoic ideas of the just ruler, a savior who provides a definitive and satisfying resolution to the poem;²¹ alternatively, the final lamentation of the women burying their dead has been interpreted as the poet’s difficulty in achieving resolution to the unimaginable suffering, or even as an allusion to the further strife ahead for Thebes.²² When Statius talks of the ending of the *Thebaid* in *Silvae* 3.2, he refers to the final scene

¹⁷ Likewise, in *Silv.* 3.5 the *Thebaid* is the product of *longi...laboris* (“long labor,” 35).

¹⁸ Laguna (1992) 239. Delarue (1996) 117–40 and McNelis (2007) discuss the importance of Callimachus for the *Thebaid*. As McNelis (2007) 21 points out, *labor* is a hallmark of the *doctus poeta*.

¹⁹ In *Silv.* 4.7.26, the *Thebaid* is described as *multa cruciata lima* (“tortured by many a file,” 26). *Lima* suggests the painstaking care given this poem, with acknowledgment of Horace’s injunction (*Ars P.* 291) to pursue poetic refinement with a “file,” yet *cruciata* acknowledges the violence involved in the endeavor.

²⁰ Hardie (1997) 140.

²¹ E.g., Braund (1996a) 12–16; Vessey (1982) 575 argues that the poem ends on a note of “uplifting optimism”; Delarue (2000) 176; cf. Hershkowitz (1998a) 296–301, who interprets Theseus as the voice not of reason but of further insanity.

²² E.g., Hardie (1997) 154; Ahl (1986) 2898. Lovatt (2005) 309–10 stakes out a compromise position by suggesting that Theseus should be seen as a “referee,” the outsider who comes to arbitrate the war. Yet he is inextricably associated with the endless female mourning of his own captive women and those Argives whom he has saved.

of lament and burial, not to Theseus' intervention for the stricken city. The heavily spondaic final line of *Silvae* 3.2, centered by *claudat* (143), suggests that Statius by dint of painstaking work will bring closure to his epic, but will do so by emphasizing at its end death, loss and the suffering of the survivors.

The specific reference to the *busta* ("tombs," *Silv.* 3.2.142) of the defeated Argives alludes here to the moment at the epic's close that evokes the "hundred mouths" *topos* (cf. *Theb.* 12.797–809); not even if Statius had a hundred mouths could he do justice to the extent of the women's grief, to *tot busta* ("so many tombs," 12.798).²³ The hyperbole suggests that there can be no end to lament, to the devastation caused by war; the poem may end, but true closure to the narrative can be only partial.²⁴ Moreover, the reference in the *Silvae* to countless tombs points to the importance of women and of lament in Statius' epic, to those alternative voices that scrutinize the conventions of Roman epic as a product of national aspirations.²⁵ In *Iliad* 24, the problem of Hector's burial was resolved.²⁶ But unlike Priam, king Adrastus of Argos did not stay to bury and mourn the dead; his daughter alone stayed to grieve with the other mourners, the mothers and wives bereft of their men. As Fantham comments, in the *Thebaid* "the grief is greater than the glory. There is no new liberty, no heroic code of values, to celebrate: there is only a tale of destruction willed by the gods as punishment for humankind."²⁷

Theseus is absent from Statius' view here of the ending; in *Silvae* 3.2 the poet represents himself as "granting" (*dederim*) the tombs (102). Thus Statius reminds us of the poet's power as the creator and controller of memory, guardian of the dead and granter of fame. Tombs and poem—both are the poet's gift and both here are the tragic receptacles of memory. From the vantage point of *Silvae* 3.2 Statius offers a pessi-

²³ All references to the *Thebaid* are to the text of Klotz (1973).

²⁴ Hardie (1997) 154–5 notes that the *topos* of the "hundred mouths" usually occurs not at the end but at a point in the poem, often the middle, where excessiveness is appropriate or necessary. Here "the effect is to leave the poem as a whole open-ended." As Henderson (1991) 61 comments, the epic ends with a "final *paralipsis* of (infinite) grief"; cf. Dominik (2003a) 105; Dominik (1996b) 69.

²⁵ See Murnaghan (1999) 203 on the function of epic lament as "at once constitutive of epic and antithetical to it, one of epic's probable sources and a subversive element within epic that can work against what epic is trying to achieve"; also Fantham (1999) 221–35.

²⁶ See Braund (1996a) 5–8.

²⁷ Fantham (1999) 232.

mistic reading of the ending of the *Thebaid* that validates the centrality of lament and of women, the chief voice of lament, in the poem.²⁸

The poem's addressee is a young military officer Maecius Celer, on tour of Egypt and the Near East.²⁹ On Celer's return, so Statius imagines, they will exchange stories, he about his work on the ending of the *Thebaid*, Celer about the exotic sites he has visited, first of all *rapidum Euphratem* ("the swift flowing river Euphrates," *Silv.* 3.2.136). The appearance of the Euphrates after Callimachus is usually the occasion for literary historical comment (Callim. *Hymn* 2.105–13).³⁰ Here the epithet *rapidum*, in contrast to *laboratas*... *Thebas*, suggests perhaps the different principles of poetic composition that underlie the quickly written *Silvae*, particularly in imagined friendly conversation with the aptly named Celer ("Swift").³¹

In Roman poetry the Euphrates also became an important symbol of the frontier and of imperial conquest.³² With the Euphrates, Statius makes pointed allusion to Vergil, since the Augustan poet referred to the Euphrates three times at the end of a poetry book, six lines from the end of books 1 and 4 of the *Georgics*, and six lines from the end of book 8 of the *Aeneid*. The Euphrates appears in the last instance in a triumphant context, political symbol of the peace that Augustus imposed on the nations of the East; the river that once was the occasion for fomenting war (*hinc mouet Euphrates, illinc Germania bellum*, *Georg.* 1.509) and for arousing Augustus' angry "thunder" (*fulminat*, *Georg.* 4.561) now flows more softly (*Euphrates ibat iam mollior undis*, *Aen.* 8.726). Hardie has argued that the ending of the *Thebaid* is indebted to the end of *Aeneid* 8, with Augustan triumphal themes reworked in Theseus' entry into Thebes.³³ The mention of the Euphrates at the end of *Silvae* 3.2 subtly confirms the importance of *Aeneid* 8 for the ending of the *Thebaid*. Yet instead of Vergil's triumphant vision of the empire enjoying a subjugated peace, the emperor surveying from his shining threshold an orderly parade of conquered nations (*Aen.* 8.720–8), Statius offers us briefly in *Silvae* 3.2 an alternative view of the struggle for empire in terms of its devastating human cost. The Euphrates—the epithet *mollior* ("more softly") in

²⁸ Henderson (1993) 185–7.

²⁹ On Maecius Celer see Hardie (1983) 156.

³⁰ Scodel and Thomas (1984) 339.

³¹ For Statius' claim of swift composition of the *Silvae*, see 1 *praef.* 1–5.

³² Mattern (1999) 109–10.

³³ Hardie (1997) 153.

Aeneid 8 suggesting Augustus' imposition of peace, his taming of foreign lands—yet again in *Silvae* 3.2 flows rapidly (*rapidum Euphratem*, 136), a subtle reference perhaps to the fact that the Vergilian vision of universal peace was short lived, that the Empire continued to be at war, sending into frontier zones young men such as the aptly named Celer; certainly Domitian was frequently engaged in rather unsuccessful frontier wars, yet set great store by his image as military commander.³⁴ Statius here “corrects” Vergil’s imperialistic vision. While in *Thebaid* 12.816–7 he acknowledges openly the importance of the *Aeneid*, the two final lines of *Silvae* 3.2 suggest his independence from the Augustan poet both in narratological approach and in vision of empire.

Inveni portum. Spes et fortuna valete³⁵

Silvae 3. 5, the final poem of the first published collection (1–3), concerns endings and also hints at new directions. The themes of leaving Rome for Naples, completing the *Thebaid*, and ending the *Silvae* are intertwined. Henderson has argued that the end of the *Thebaid* acknowledges Statius’ important debt to Ovid as well as to Vergil.³⁶ It seems no coincidence then that at the end of book 3 of the *Silvae*, in a poem moreover in which he reflects upon the completion of his epic and *Silvae* 1–3, Statius again turns to Ovid as a model for political and poetic reflection.

Silvae 3.5 takes the form of a letter that Statius writes to his wife Claudia, urging her to join him in retirement in Naples rather than stay in Rome to find a husband for her daughter by a previous marriage. His letter hints at several reasons for the decision to leave Rome, among them frustration at lack of imperial recognition, fuelled by his failure to win first prize at the imperial Capitoline games.³⁷ He complains to his wife that the emperor proved himself an *ingratumque*... /

³⁴ Jones (1992) 128–31, 139 notes that Domitian’s triumphs were “undeserved” but that Domitian wanted military glory; he celebrated, for instance, a triumph over the Chatti despite inconclusive wars.

³⁵ Taken from a plaque on a modern Neapolitan villa.

³⁶ Henderson (1993) 188; Malamud (1995) 191; Braund (1996a) 7–8. More generally see also Dominik (2003a) 91–109, who argues that the epilogue is designed to encourage the reader to consider the *Thebaid*’s relation to a host of earlier poets and its role within the literary, especially epic, tradition.

³⁷ Statius also complains of advancing age (*Silu.* 3.5.13) and illness (3.5.37–42). Coleman (1988) xvii–xviii suggests 90 CE as the most likely date for the Capitoline games. See Hardie (1983) 65; Garthwaite (1989) 81–91; Laguna (1992) 392.

Iouem (“ungrateful Jove,” 32–3) on that occasion.³⁸ Ovid’s elegiacs, the *Heroides* and in particular the exile poetry, provide the model for Statius’ assumption of two Ovidian *personae* here, the abandoned lover and the exiled poet.³⁹ He hints at the two Ovidian roles when he asks why the decision to leave Rome is *triste* (“sad”) for his wife (*cur hoc triste tibi?*, 14), the adjective providing a sly allusion to the *Tristia*; likewise, he reminds his readers of the *Heroides* as well as Ovid’s letters to his wife from exile when he compares his wife, as Ovid did, to *Veteres Latias Graias, heroidas* (“the old Greek and Roman heroines,” 45), in particular Penelope (cf., e.g., *Silv.* 3.5.46–7; *Ov. Tr.* 1.6.21–2).⁴⁰

As an abandoned lover, a generally female role, and as a poet joyful at leaving Rome, Statius notably inverts these Ovidian roles. Indeed, Statius’ wife is still with him in Rome; his “exile” from Rome is as yet primarily psychological, not physical. Yet just as Ovid used the epistle to keep his memory alive among the Roman people, reminding them of the importance of his *Metamorphoses*,⁴¹ similarly Statius uses the epistolary genre to stress the importance of his *Thebaid*, now at last completed.⁴²

The Ovidian literary epistle moreover, with which Ovid alternately cajoled and attacked the emperor, provides Statius with the format for a hidden polemic against Rome, the seat of empire, but morally and politically unstable, and uncaring of its poets. Attuned to the dangers of open speech, and with the cautionary tale of Ovid’s exile lurking behind the epistle, Statius voices his critique to his wife, not the emperor. He assumes the voice of the disempowered—the abandoned lover and the exile. In the dedicatory preface to Pollius Felix, the wealthy villa owner of *Silvae* 2.2 to whom book 3 is dedicated (*meus... Pollius*, 3.5.103) and who provides another important audience

³⁸ Vollmer (1998) 431 argues that with “Jupiter” Statius could not possibly mean Domitian; but Statius calls the emperor this in the previous poem, *Silv.* 3.4.18: Garthwaite (1989) 87–90.

³⁹ Laguna (1992) 342; Burck (1987) 137–53 argues also for the influence of Hor. *Sat.* 2.6 here. Hinds (1985) 15, 28 argues that the *Tristia* rewrite the *Heroides*.

⁴⁰ Hinds (1985) 17–18. As Henderson (2007) 266–8 points out, the models for Statius’ wife are not only Ovidian; Lucan’s Cornelia (wife of Pompey) also provides a provocative model for Claudia.

⁴¹ See Hinds (1985) 16.

⁴² Burck (1986) 215–27 takes another approach by investigating the rare extended depiction of a conjugal relationship in *Silvae* 3.5.

for the poem, Statius describes his letter as *sermo... securus* ("safe speech," 3 *praef.* 21–2) that avoids the risk of direct confrontation with the holders of imperial power; Pollius is a "safe" (*securus*, 3 *praef.* 6) recipient for a poem that negotiates between Rome and Naples, the twin poles of Statius' poetic career. Yet Naples, unlike Ovid's Tomis, proves a strong card, a vital cultural centre where Statius can maintain authority outside Rome.⁴³ Although Statius writes in hexameters, his elegiac, anti-epic voice is consonant with the completion of the *Thebaid*.

Silvae 3.5 begins with a common elegiac scene (1–2) that also replays an important episode in the *Thebaid* (3.678–721). Statius is kept awake every night by his wife's anxious sighs (*peruigili cura*, 2), just as Argia in *Theb.* 3 was kept awake by Polynices (*peruigil angor*, 690). Yet whereas in the *Thebaid* the solution to sorrow is the call to war, Statius, casting himself as Odysseus, makes it clear that he is done with "war":

...egomet patrio de litore raptus
quattuor emeritis per bella, per aequora lustris
errarem...

(Stat. *Silv.* 3.5.6–8)

...torn away from my native shore, I wandered through wars, through seas for twenty complete years...

As Vessey points out, *bella* ("wars") refer to the *Thebaid*; Naples is the Ithaca that will heal the wanderer.⁴⁴ With characteristic ambivalence Statius' epic is described in terms of the poet's heroic suffering even as he aligns himself with Homer and Ovid; in addition here he suggests that writing the *Thebaid* represented exile from his true home and a more congenial poetic identity. Completion of the *Thebaid* and release from anxious, sleepless Rome are inextricably connected.

Indeed, the notion of sleeplessness is connected also with the composition of the *Thebaid*. Appropriately for the poem's Ovidian tenor, the *Thebaid* is described through an adaptation of a common amatory motif of elegiac poetry, the *carmen uigilatum* ("carefully wrought poem") that keeps lovers awake (cf., e.g., Ov. *Ars Am.* 2.285, *Fast.* 4.109, *Ep.* 12.169).⁴⁵ The imagery however is parental rather than erotic; together Statius and his wife have "watched over" this poem:

⁴³ Thus Silius Italicus settled on the Bay of Naples to write his *Punica* in political withdrawal from Rome (Plin. *Ep.* 3.7).

⁴⁴ Vessey (1976–77) 139.

⁴⁵ Laguna (1992) 364–5; Thomas (1979) 198–206.

...tu procurentia primis
 carmina nostra sonis totasque in murmure noctes
 aure rapis uigili; longi tu sola laboris
 conscia, cumque tuis creuit mea Thebais annis.

(Stat. *Silv.* 3.5.33–6)

...you eagerly hear my first flow of song, passing whole nights with wakeful ear amidst my poetic murmurings; you alone have been privy to my long labor, and my *Thebaid* grew up with the passing of your years.

Statius' comments echo those at the end of the *Thebaid*, when he refers to the epic as *mihi bisseos multum uigilata per annos / Thebai* ("Thebaid, watched over at night for twelve years," *Theb.* 12.811–12). The adjectives *uigili* and *uigilata* ("wakeful," "watched over at night") emphasize the exquisite care given the poem, hinting at the Hellenistic literary values that have shaped this generically complex epic.⁴⁶ At the same time the adjective suggests that the poem is like a child to the couple, to be watched over at night, that grew up as they themselves aged; twelve years, the period of composition for the *Thebaid* and of biological maturity, was the legal minimum age for Roman girls to marry.⁴⁷ Thus as part of his persuasive strategy Statius subtly reminds his wife that, while she is wrapped up with her biological daughter in Rome, she has obligations also to their metaphorical daughter, the glorious offspring that is his epic, on which they have together patiently lavished much care.

Statius perhaps uses the same metaphor at the end of the *Thebaid* when he famously orders his poem to follow in the footsteps of the *Aeneid*: *uiue precor; nec tu diuinam Aeneida tempta, / sed longe sequere et uestigia semper adora* ("live on, I pray, and do not make trial of the holy *Aeneid*, but follow her always from afar and reverence her footsteps," *Theb.* 12.816–17).⁴⁸ The poem has been interpreted as Creusa or Eurydice, dutiful wives, following in the footsteps of the *Aeneid*.⁴⁹ The metaphor of the child, however, invokes a more powerful, Bloomian challenge towards the *Aeneid*.⁵⁰ Statius' injunction to his poem at the end of the *Thebaid* can also be interpreted, I suggest, as Statius speaking as a

⁴⁶ At *Silvae* 4.6.25 *uigilare* suggests Callimachean refinement; see Delarue (1996) 117–40. McNelis (2007) 22–3 traces the motif of 'wakefulness' in Roman poetry from Cinna frag. 11.1–2, a direct response to Callim. *Ep.* 27.4.

⁴⁷ Treggiari (1991) 402.

⁴⁸ Cf. also the parental metaphor at *Achil.* 1.12–13.

⁴⁹ E.g., Malamud (1995) 27; Nugent (1996) 46–71; Pagán (2000) 439–48.

⁵⁰ Ovid's *Metamorphoses* also echoes strongly in the poet's coda; see above, n. 37.

paterfamilias to a child, expressing the hope that it will live and that it will respect its elders. But, as Statius himself enjoins in other *Silvae*, the child should dutifully follow and then challenge its elders: *surge agetum iuuenemque puer deprendere parentem* ("come child, bestir yourself and overtake your youthful father," *Silv.* 4.4.72; cf. 4.7.41–4). The metaphor of the epic as child, the author as parent, encapsulates the proud and anguished relationship between Statius and the *Thebaid* that he portrays in the *Silvae*.

When, in the concluding section of his poem (*Silv.* 3.5.81–105), Statius praises Naples as a place of *numquam turbata quies somnique peracti* ("untroubled quiet and unbroken sleep," 85), he implies then that he is finished with poetic, or at least epic, composition. Released from the torment of writing about Thebes, the source of so much pain and pride, Statius rejects another cutthroat city, Rome itself.⁵¹ Unlike the exiled Ovid, Statius vehemently represents the capital as crowded, noisy and dangerous. Playing off Vergil's stark contrast between the farmer's idealized life and a Rome racked by civil war (*Georg.* 2.458–540), Statius characterizes the city by the *rabies* ("madness," *Silv.* 3.587) of its forum⁵² and by a punitive legal system with *strictae in iurgia leges* ("laws unsheathed against disputes," 87), the martial metaphor suggesting the militaristic and violent character of Roman society.⁵³ Statius' Rome is an anarchic capital, mad for power and ruled nonetheless by an iron rod. In the seal poem to books 1–3 Rome, indifferent to Statius' genius, emerges as another Thebes.

Naples, the centre of Greek culture in Italy, represents by contrast a moral and philosophical as well as literary centre; here Statius has patrons like Pollius Felix (*meus... Pollio*, *Silv.* 3.5.103). Naples is portrayed as Rome's rival with spacious porticoes, temples, theatres and festive games (89–94). Indeed, it surpasses Rome in the serenity it offers, for as in the Golden Age, there is harmonious, natural law, justice without the fasces (88);⁵⁴ and, significantly, undisturbed sleep (86). The climate too is gentle, the sea calm and *imbelle* ("unwarlike," 84), a metaphor for the philosophical state of *ataraxia*, for the sea is often a symbol of

⁵¹ *Silv.* 3.5 is the first poem in the collection to acknowledge the completion of the *Thebaid*. See Vessey (1973) 42.

⁵² The Circus too is a mad battleground: *rabidi...proelia Circi*, 3.5.15.

⁵³ Cf. *ferrea iura / insanumque forum* ("iron laws and the mad forum," Verg. *Georg.* 2.501–2).

⁵⁴ Cf. Ovid's Golden Age where the first people *sine lege fidem rectumque colebat* ("cultivated trust and right without law," *Met.* 1.90).

unpredictable violence and is associated with the dangers that have affected human beings since the end of the Golden Age.⁵⁵ But it also reflects Statius' rejection of *bella* (7) as his poetic preoccupation.

Naples is represented here as both a real and an ideal place, a "heterotopia," to use Foucault's term, that is, not a lost paradise but an actually realized utopia, a space that is both timeless and located firmly in contemporary life, physically protected and yet accessible; the perfect example for Foucault is the garden, where artificial order is imposed upon natural profusion.⁵⁶ Thus, though Statius assumes the voice of the disempowered, Naples is represented as a powerful, actual alternative to imperial Rome; its society is founded on moral and philosophical order, not on military might. Entry is privileged; Statius "labors to return" (*transferre laboro*, *Silv.* 3.5.82), the reference to *labor* with its Callimachean associations suggesting the exclusive, special character of Statius' chosen retreat and his transferal of his epic energies to a new type of literary endeavor. The *pax secura* ("secure peace," 3.5.85)⁵⁷ that Statius will enjoy in Naples echoes the preface of *Silvae* 3, where Statius describes his epistle as a form of *securus* ("safe," 23) speech, the word *sermo* (23) suggesting a generic as well as physical shift on the Horatian model, a turning from lyric (and epic) to letters and retirement, like Horace with the *Epistles*.⁵⁸ Statius thus situates himself socially and ideologically at a distance from the *Thebaid* and the city that fostered its composition. The decision to leave Rome for Naples involves the transferal of his poetic gifts to an apparently more congenial and supportive environment.

The poet's psychological distance from Rome is underlined through its public spaces, the Circus (*Silv.* 3.5.15), theater (16) and forum (87). The poem's last line provides the only specific reference to a monument, the temple of Quirinus; even this will lose its attraction for his wife if she does not accompany him to Naples:

sine me tibi ductor aquarum
Thybris et armiferi sordebunt tecta Quirini.
(Stat. *Silv.* 3.5.111–12)

Without me Tiber commander of waters and the halls of arms-bearing Quirinus will be repellent to you.

⁵⁵ Vessey (1976–77) 138.

⁵⁶ Foucault (1998) 178–85.

⁵⁷ Cf. *et securo quies* ("and untroubled quiet," Verg. *G.* 2.467–8).

⁵⁸ Horace uses *sermo* of the *Epistles* as well as the *Satires* at e.g., *Ep.* 1.4.1.

The temple of Quirinus, restored handsomely by Augustus, was on the Quirinal,⁵⁹ the hill that was particularly identified with the Flavian family, for Domitian was born in a house there (Suet. *Dom.* 1.1). Indeed, as the deified Romulus, Quirinus was an appropriate deity for an emperor intent on stressing his closeness to the gods well beyond the efforts of his predecessors.⁶⁰ Domitian seems to have developed that connection by building nearby on the site of his birthplace the magnificent *Templum Gentis Flaviae* (the temple of the Flavian dynasty);⁶¹ it seems to have alluded to the temple of Quirinus and to Romulus in its sculptural embellishment.⁶² Dedicated to the deified members of the imperial family, the *Templum Gentis Flaviae* served as imperial mausoleum and shrine, above all honoring Domitian, for it celebrated his propitious birth, his career, and glorious afterlife to come. Lavishly constructed of gold and marble between 89 and 95 CE, the very period in which the *Silvae* were being written, it was probably the most important Flavian building in Rome at this period (Mart. 9.20.1). The poem's concluding words, *tecta Quirini* ("the halls of Quirinus," 3.5.112) surely then invite the reader to think of the temple of the Flavian dynasty as well as the nearby temple of Quirinus with which it was ideologically linked; in significant proximity to one another they formed an important dynastic complex of buildings on the Quirinal.⁶³

If so, Statius begins and ends the *Silvae* by referring to two of the most important Flavian monuments of his day, the colossal equestrian statue of Domitian at the start of book 1 and the *templum Gentis Flaviae* at the end of book 3. Yet Statius' physical position in Rome is entirely different from that in book 1, where he addresses the statue from the middle of the forum; here in *Silvae* 3.5 he is speaking to his wife from the intimate space of the letter writer and with one foot out the door on the way to Naples.

By rejection of the emperor's monuments in the poem's final lines the poem implicates Domitian in the failure of Rome to support its poets and give them a meaningful voice within the state. As at the end of Ovid's *Fasti* (6.795–6), Quirinus serves as an important sign

⁵⁹ Coarelli (1999) 4.185–7.

⁶⁰ Hannestad (1988) 142.

⁶¹ Coarelli (1995) 2.368–9. Mentioned also in *Silv.* 4.2.60, 4.3.18–19, 5.1.240–1.

⁶² D'Ambra (1993) 44; Davies (2000) 150–8.

⁶³ On the importance of the Quirinal to Domitian's rebuilding of Rome see D'Ambra (1993) 35–8, 42–6.

of closure, a god of Rome's beginnings who also presages the glorious afterlife of the city's emperors. Yet while Quirinus provided an important prototype for imperial apotheosis, Quirinus served also as a reminder of the pollution of fratricidal strife that racked Rome as well as Thebes, particularly here when he is described as *armiferus* ("arms-bearing," *Silv.* 3.5.112). These final lines emphasise again the militaristic character of Rome, alien to Statius' new poetic agenda of *Silvae*.⁶⁴ The Tiber is described as *ductor aquarum* ("the commander of the waters," 111–12), *ductor* being a military term used of Domitian as commander of Rome's troops.⁶⁵

With *armiferi Quirini* ("arms-bearing Quirinus," *Silv.* 3.5.112) Statius conflates epic and politics, Thebes and Rome. The adjective *armiferi* provides a generic prompt to the *arma* of epic, the conventional theme that Statius so vividly deconstructs in the *Thebaid*; Domitian's Rome is drawn into the literary orbit of Thebes as rejection of epic and of the Flavian city are here combined. Statius' complaint against Rome ends at the very seat of the Flavian dynasty, the Quirinal. "Warlike Quirinus" encapsulates the frustration of a distinguished epic poet at the failure of patronage from the very top; "arms" and the emperor have lost their lure. The threat of departure encompasses a powerful reminder of the talents that Rome and her emperor stand to lose. The poet's desire to retreat to Naples is represented as both a release from the heroic toil of epic composition and also as a protest against the instability of Rome as a social and political capital, ruled over by an emperor bent on war, not on the protection of his people or the cultivation of its poets.

Silvae 3.5 provides a powerful poetic fiction of physical and literary withdrawal.⁶⁶ Although book 4 of the *Silvae*, published two years later and written in both Rome and Naples, begins with three poems addressing the emperor, Statius' poetry does go in a new direction, though not to *sermones*. In *Silvae* 4.4, written from Naples, he rejects imperial pressure to write an epic celebrating Domitian's deeds (*Silv.* 4.4.95–6; *Achil.* 1.14–19);⁶⁷ such a poem is equivalent to embarking on dangerous

⁶⁴ On Quirinus' martial character see also *Silv.* 5.2.129 and Laguna (1992) 391–2.

⁶⁵ Laguna (1992) 392.

⁶⁶ See Henderson (2007) 245: "His poems do chart an exit trajectory where the writing self-dramatises the process of its own reckoning with its standing, first at Rome, then in the heartland of Campagna, but finally at home and in the meltdown realm of mortal existence."

⁶⁷ On the dating of the *Achilleid*, see Coleman (1988) xxi.

seas (*Silv.* 4.4.99–100) just when his *Thebaid*, like Statius himself, has reached harbor (4.4.88–9). His new epic, the *Achilleid*, takes an entirely different direction.⁶⁸ It is written in the safe ports of the Bay of Naples (*Silv.* 4.4.51–5) and is inspired by love (*Achil.* 1.5); the filial figure of Achilles, who unlike Domitian has been “forbidden the sky” and a place in dynastic succession (*Achil.* 1.2), acts instead as the “prelude” (*praeludit Achilles, Achil.* 1.19) to the emperor, language that echoes the preface to the *Silvae* (*praeluserit, 1 praef.* 9) and denotes “playfulness” as well as prefatory material.⁶⁹ With the *Achilleid*, moreover, Statius fastens upon a hero more congenial to his “Silvan” *persona*, a speedster for the speedwriter.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Hinds (1997) 135–42 argues for a predominantly Ovidian aesthetic in the *Achilleid*; see also Barchiesi (1996) 45–62 on the complex intertextuality of the poem. On mention of the *Achilleid* in the *Silvae* see Heslin (2005) 58–62.

⁶⁹ Dilke (1954) 82 *ad Achil.* 1.18–19; Heslin (2005) 78–80. See also Lovatt (2005) 9–10 on Statius’ poetics of play.

⁷⁰ Statius plays on this metaphor when he has writer’s block, his Achilles stuck at the first turning post (*Silv.* 4.7.23–4). I would like to thank William Dominik and John Henderson for their comments on a draft of this paper.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

LUDIMUS INNOCUI: INTERPRETING MARTIAL'S IMPERIAL EPIGRAMS

John Garthwaite

Most readers nowadays take it for granted that the experiences and views claimed by the authorial or first-person voice in the works of the Roman poets do not necessarily represent the actual circumstances and opinions of their creator. The once confident reconstruction of Juvenal's life and beliefs, for example, from the apparent evidence of his satires has now yielded to a much more wary approach.¹ Accordingly, the cynical and smugly detached speaker of the later satires is seen as no less a literary fabrication or mask than the outrageously indignant moralist of the early poems, rather than as reflective of actual change in the writer's situation and outlook. In the case of Martial, however, Juvenal's fellow poet and apparent acquaintance, the identification of author with the speaker of the epigrams should be more secure, if only by dint of the sheer abundance of information that the latter repeatedly insists as being autobiographical.² In particular, from virtually the beginning to the end of his extant works, Martial presents himself as the threadbare client, grudgingly courting mostly unresponsive and arrogant patrons and yearning for an end to his oppression.³ The image is the most prominent aspect of his literary self-portrait and its very repetitiveness has fostered an enduring impression of the poet as a humble dependent and servile opportunist.⁴

Nevertheless, as Sullivan remarks, "the mendicant *persona* which Martial found it desirable to adopt should not be taken too literally" and, certainly, inconsistencies are not hard to find.⁵ For though Martial emphasizes the modesty and discomfort of his third floor apartment

¹ The traditional biographical interpretation is exemplified by Highet (1954) and followed by Green (1974) 11–24. For the speaker of the satires as a *persona* whose views need not reflect those of the author, see Braund (1996); Winkler (1983).

² The Juvenal whom Martial addresses in *Ep.* 7.24, 7.91, and 12.18 is invariably taken to be the satirist. Cf. Nauta (2002) 5.

³ For a representative list of epigrams, see Sullivan (1991) 26–8.

⁴ E.g., Post (1908) xiii; Duff (1927) 521.

⁵ Sullivan (1991) 4.

on the Quirinal (1.86; 1.108; 1.117), he also admits to having at least a reasonably sized household of slaves and later even claims to own a personal barber (8.52). We also learn from the earliest poems that, in addition to his apartment, he possesses simultaneously a country estate at Nomentum (13.15; 13.42; 13.119).⁶ Even the latter, however, is described in contradictory terms, being sometimes dismissed as utterly barren (7.31; 9.54) yet elsewhere portrayed as productive of wine and foodstuffs for the poet and his guests (10.48).⁷ Of course, the greatest obstacle to taking Martial in reality as the indigent client he so often presents to us is his frequently repeated admission or boast that he holds equestrian status and, it follows, the 400,000 sesterces that come with it (3.95.9–10; 5.13.2; 5.17.2; 9.49.4; 12.29.2). Thus, even though modern opinion is still divided over the degree of financial independence this would have provided, it is clear that Martial enjoyed a substantial income.⁸ Certainly it was one that, at the least, would have elevated him above the ragged clothing and rickety furniture that he bemoans as his lot (e.g., 2.43).

Quite apart from this variable representation of his economic circumstances, Martial provides sufficient inconsistencies in other details of his life to suggest that, like Juvenal, he can shift character to suit his literary purposes. Thus, he can pose within the same book as both married and single (e.g., 2.49; 2.92; 11.19; 11.23; 11.43; 11.104), just as he repeatedly and vociferously rejects taking up the profession of law (1.17; 2.30) though elsewhere we find him pleading Sextus' case in court (8.17).⁹ Similarly, he can mock or denounce the efforts of legacy hunters (e.g., 1.10; 2.26) while admitting to the same practices himself (e.g., 5.39; 10.8).

It has been argued, however, that the "real" Martial, rather than a literary *persona*, is most likely to be heard in epigrams addressed to real, rather than fictional, recipients.¹⁰ Granted, we are less inclined to consider authorial disguise in commemorations of actual events and exchanges with verifiable individuals than in poems in which situations or personalities, or both, are demonstrably false. Sometimes, however,

⁶ For the date of book 13 see Leary (2001) 12–3.

⁷ Cf. Hardie (1983) 51.

⁸ For contrasting views on Martial's financial situation and the kind of support he expected from patrons, see White (1978) and Saller (1983).

⁹ On Martial's marital status see Watson (2003) 38–48.

¹⁰ E.g., Damon (1997) 159–65; Nauta (2002) 48.

it is not easy to make such a distinction. The first person speaker of 11.24, for example, represents himself as both a poet and a disgruntled client, constrained to dance endless attention on Labullus, flattering his every remark. Meanwhile, his own poetry remains unwritten, though his work is the delight of all Rome and the envy of fellow poets. Such, he concludes, is the cost for an author who feels compelled to chase dinner invitations. For Damon, the likelihood that Labullus is fictional suggests that the parasitical hanger-on of the epigram likewise has “little of the real Martial.”¹¹ Nauta, however, sees no reason why the *ego* of this epigram should not be seen as essentially the poet himself since the latter elsewhere similarly claims to be universally popular and the object of professional jealousy (e.g., 8.3; 9.97).¹² Indeed, one could find a particularly close analogy in 10.70, where Martial complains to Potitus (whose description as *docte* [“learned”] in line 2 suggests a real rather than fictional addressee) that his constant and demeaning client duties, with their scant monetary reward, leave barely enough time for the production of one book a year.

Similarly directed at identifiable addressees and seemingly transparent in its aims, 10.48 professes to be an invitation to several prominent patrons, listing the humble fare on offer at a dinner at Martial’s place. Here, in a poem that Saller calls “sober and unlikely to mislead,” Martial apparently provides a realistic insight into the productivity of his farm and the nature of his relationship with influential acquaintances.¹³ Gowers has demonstrated, however, that neither the circumstances nor the setting of the epigram are necessarily authentic.¹⁴ Rather, Martial is adapting a long tradition of invitation poems and culinary metaphors not only to transform the rustic dishes themselves into crude and salacious fellow guests but also to make them emblematic of his own verse, lowly but enticingly spiced with obscene wit. The poem is thus a social document, to the extent that it involves a circle that we can confidently identify as made up of actual patrons and acquaintances, yet cleverly transformed into a subtle literary game.

Within this challenging mix of fact and fiction the reader also encounters a similarly paradoxical combination of panegyric and mockery. This consists not simply of alternating poems of praise and abuse or

¹¹ Damon (1997) 165.

¹² Nauta (2002) 55 n. 50.

¹³ Saller (1983) 247.

¹⁴ Gowers (1993) 255–64.

of following an ostensibly serious piece with a parody of it. We also find barbs buried inside compliments even to prominent recipients. The consular Arruntius Stella, one of the recipients of 10.48, is a primary dedicatee of Martial's first numbered book, indeed second only to the emperor. In 1.7 Martial praises him as a celebrated fellow poet whose verses about his mistress' pet dove excel even Catullus' sparrow poems.¹⁵ The notion that *tanto Stella meus tuo Catullo/ quanto passere maior est columba* ("my Stella is bigger than Catullus by as much as the dove is bigger than the sparrow," 1.7.4–5) takes on a humorously salty tone, perhaps much appreciated by Stella, if Martial reads Catullus' sparrow as a phallic metaphor.¹⁶ But there is a sting in the tail, as Fitzgerald points out.¹⁷ For Martial clearly also echoes Catullus' supposedly deferential, but quite possibly ironic, encomium to Cicero, hailing the latter as the greatest legal champion by as far as Catullus is the worst of poets (Catul. 49.6–7). Just as Catullus' suspiciously hyperbolic self-deprecation might serve by analogy actually to give the lie to his claim about the orator's stature, so Martial might be craftily puncturing his patron's poetic reputation by over-inflating it. We might assume that the jab was not lost on Stella but that he had the grace and wit to appreciate its cleverness.

The same dissonance between apparent compliment and covert jest can be seen in 11.52. An invitation poem, like 10.48, it is addressed to Julius Cerealis who is also one of the recipients of the earlier epigram and a man whom Kay defines as "a friend and benefactor who is socially superior."¹⁸ Here Martial promises Cerealis hospitable company and simple fare at his home. Moreover, he vows not to inflict readings of his poetry on his guest—so often elsewhere the price exacted by the host on his captive audience (e.g., 3.45; 3.50). Instead he will magnanimously allow Cerealis to recite the whole of his *Gigantomachy* or his *rura* ("rustic poems," 11.52.18) that are excelled only by Vergil's immortal works. A fine compliment to a fellow poet yet, again, one that hides a barb. For Martial elsewhere makes no pretence of his distaste for interminable and hackneyed epic such as the "Battle of the Giants" (e.g., 9.50.6; 10.4.9–10). And he gives us a hint of his true feelings here when he envisages the possibility of Cerealis reading his composition

¹⁵ Cf. Nauta (2002) 155–7; White (1975) 267–72.

¹⁶ Cf. Kay (1985) 75–6.

¹⁷ Fitzgerald (2007) 78–9.

¹⁸ Kay (1985) 180. On this poem see also Gowers (1993) 264–7.

licet usque ("even all the way through," 11.52.17). Indeed, it might be even more of a chore in that he might have had to sit through it at least once before. For he writes to Cerealis, *relegas* ("you may recite it (yet?) again," 11.52.17).

In both 1.7 and 11.52 Martial simultaneously praises and pans his addressees, complimenting them on the literary talents in which they obviously took much pride, yet teasing them for their artistic pretensions. As we will see, Martial can be simultaneously positive and negative about the worth and durability of his own poetry. But the practice of affirming and negating in virtually the same breath is not limited to issues of artistic merit. Rather it is, I think, a fundamental part of Martial's literary technique, to be found in a variety of contexts.

Given the willful contradictoriness of their speaker is it therefore pointless to seek an authentic authorial voice in the epigrams? Certainly, the seemingly irreconcilable shifts in his statements, and his constant role-playing, have led both Holzberg and Lorenz to the view that this speaker is throughout a wholly fictional creation.¹⁹ Similarly, they argue that even identifiable addressees become merely frames for dramatic fabrications. On this reading, therefore, the entire poetic corpus is a sophisticated *jeu d'esprit* whose purpose is solely to entertain and from which it is futile to try to extract authentic details or serious opinions. Indeed, Holzberg and Lorenz consider it misguided to ask what coincidence exists between the sentiments and situation of the speaker and his inventor since the whole point is to fashion an uncertain world of sportive illusion conjured up by a comically inconsistent narrator. That is, he is as much an object of humor as those social faults and defective personalities he criticizes. Thus the audience should appreciate the sharp wit and flippancy of the poems rather than seeking serious social or political commentary. Of course, this view has much in common with recent approaches to other writers such as Petronius and, particularly, Juvenal.²⁰

To some extent this manner of engagement with the epigrams has much to commend it. Apart from highlighting the habitual inconsistency of the text it accords with the speaker's own assertions that the epigrams are (mere) *lusus et ioci* ("jokes and games," 1.35.13). Incidentally, it also supports the insistence voiced in the prologue to book 1 that the poems

¹⁹ Holzberg (2002) and Lorenz (2002).

²⁰ Cf. Panayotakis (1995) esp. 194–6; Braund (1996) 1–3.

are free of malice to recognizable individuals, since their sole aim is to entertain: *cum salua infimarum quoque personarum reuerentia ludant* ("they play games in a spirit of wholesome respect even toward lowly individuals," 1 *praef.* 2–3). It also harmonizes in several respects, as we shall see, with the speaker's involvement with the emperor in book 1. But we should note some limitations. Most obviously, the reader can not exclude the author Martial altogether from his work. This is not a hermetically sealed poetic fiction since, in contrast to Juvenal, for example, the poet does provide biographical details whose authenticity we can not plausibly reject. There are no grounds to deny the reality of his equestrian rank and imperial gift of the *ius trium liberorum* ("rights of three children") or of his Nomentan farm. Neither can we discount the existence of a multitude of identifiable relationships, as noted above, with men quite properly deemed to be patrons and, it follows, Martial's involvement with various duties and obligations as a client.²¹ Nor can we ignore the fact of his eventual retirement to Spain for which, of course, we have external corroboration (Plin. *Ep.* 3.21), and which inevitably colors our understanding of much of the final two books. Of course, this is not to deny that such facts are reconfigured to fit a variety of situations and personalities that are often quite deliberately at odds with each other. But if we acknowledge only a wholly fictional personality who is totally devoid of authorial sentiment even though he is deliberately endowed with authentic biographical details, we are surely excising an intrinsic part of the make-up of our first-person speaker that acts as a foil for his other *personae*, thereby restricting rather than enhancing the critical possibilities of his work.

Let us take as an illustration the speaker's assessment of the worth and, hence, durability of his poetry, an issue he treats with the same inconsistency that pervades the rest of his work.²² At 3.2, for example, he assures himself that under Faustinus' patronage his manuscript will win the praise of even the harshest critic and so avoid a hasty demise, yet at the book's close (3.100) he concedes ironically that it is really worth only a watery end. Similarly, he can dismiss his poems in one book as ephemeral trifles (e.g., 2.1), yet claim them in another as guaranteed of immortality (e.g., 8.3). Both viewpoints are juxtaposed in

²¹ Cf. Nauta (2002) 52–6.

²² Roman (2001) 113–45 provides an incisive analysis of Martial's simultaneous denial and assertion of his work's value and durability. Cf. Dominik (1999) 179–80.

4.10 in which Martial sends his freshly finished book to his dear friend, Faustinus. In mimicking Catullus 1 the epigram leads the reader to anticipate a similar closing prayer for the volume's longevity. Instead, Martial sends a sponge along with his text, anticipating that Faustinus will make not just an occasional correction but rub out the entire contents. Again we find Martial playing two contradictory sentiments against each other, undoubtedly here to comic effect. Yet elsewhere he leaves us in little doubt that he actually has a more deeply held conviction on this issue.

In 4.49, for example, he argues vehemently to his friend and fellow poet, Flaccus, that contemporary epic and tragedy are far more deserving than epigram to be dismissed as mere games and jokes. It is a position he repeats no less strenuously elsewhere, such as in 8.3, 10.2 and 10.4, where he again asserts his confidence in the immortality of his work and its greater relevance and popularity with the reading public, compared to the weightier genres. In these instances, where there is no simultaneous retraction or added note of self-mockery, Martial seems to be speaking *in propria persona*. If there is a contradiction to be sensed in these epigrams it is, I think, not so much to illustrate the amusing inconsistencies of the first person speaker, or to engage in a self-mocking way with a traditional literary issue, as to point to a disjunction between an authorial belief and current opinion concerning the status of epigram within the literary canon. As an example of the latter we need look no further than Pliny's assessment of the prospects for the survival of Martial's work (*Ep.* 3.21.6). Its negativity is all the more noteworthy given Pliny's accompanying eulogy of Martial's poetic artistry and his own appreciation of the piece the epigrammatist had written in his honor.

What conclusions, then, are we to draw from a group of epigrams in book 5? 5.10 relays a supposed conversation between Martial and Regulus, the powerful and notorious prosecutor, and recipient of many of Martial's epigrams. The speaker of the first two lines is Regulus himself, asking why writers are never accorded fame and honor in their own lifetime. Martial then defers respectfully to his questioner, agreeing that the politics of envy deny the living their due recognition. He closes by applying the same principle to himself, claiming that if fame is to be his only posthumously, he is in no hurry to seek it. The acquiescence, however, is only a matter of lip service, as Martial makes clear in 5.13 which, despite its change of theme and addressee, is clearly intended as a corrective to 5.10. For here, in contrast, he trumpets the universal

popularity of his poetry and his enjoyment of a reputation that few writers are given even after their death.

A few epigrams later, the emperor himself is drawn into this game of claim and counterclaim. In 5.15 Martial boasts to Domitian of the many recipients of his poetic tributes who have been given undying fame as a result: *uictura meo munere fama* ("fame that will endure thanks to me," 5.15.4). Clearly the poet is convinced here of his literary immortality. To which the emperor (the major beneficiary of such panegyric) responds rather disparagingly, asking what profit actually accrues (to their author, one assumes) from all these good services. As with his response to Regulus, the poet's reply is suitably compliant, insisting that the writing is reward in itself. Readers already familiar with the speaker's avowedly materialistic attitude to his craft might suspect that the answer is disingenuous—though perhaps prudent, given the identity of the interlocutor. But he himself betrays the irony of his reply in 5.16 where he gloomily contrasts the wealth of the legal profession with the poverty of his own and swears that the continuing disregard of poetry will make a lawyer of him yet.

As both Holzberg and Lorenz argue, such epigrams do indeed form part of a witty dramatic performance, with even the emperor occasionally playing a supporting role.²³ And, as we have seen, the contrariness of the opinions and circumstances claimed for himself by our presenter is a persistent feature, not only of these interludes but of the books in general. Admittedly, the juxtaposition here of such contrasting, if not contradictory, statements could denote a humorously shallow, or untrustworthy speaker. Indeed, Sullivan suggests that Martial's intent seems to be to create doubt in the audience as to whether he is ever serious about anything.²⁴ And in book 5 we might conclude that the intention is to highlight the acquiescence of one *persona*, the humble and opportunistic client-poet only too ready to endorse his superior's views, by contrasting him ironically with a more willfully independent *alter ego*. Yet, as we have seen, the latter's sentiments are virtually identical to those that the speaker voices elsewhere, for no other reason, apparently, than his belief in their truth. Just as Martial occasionally brings authentic biographical details into his text so he sometimes allows us a glimpse of genuine opinion behind the jest. I suggest, then, that the

²³ Holzberg (2002) 68–70; Lorenz (2002) 145–52.

²⁴ Sullivan (1991) 215.

tensions and paradoxes evident in these epigrams of book 5 are not wholly exercises in literary wit, however complex and elaborative of a traditional concern among poets about the merits and longevity of their work. On a more serious level Martial is counterbalancing two sets of opposing critical perceptions, his own view set against the more authoritative voice of convention, each no less real than the other.

The seemingly unpredictable twists and contradictions of tone and content that characterize the epigrams can also be found in the models Martial cites as inspiration for, and justification of, the spirit of his verse. In particular, in the preface to book 1 and its opening poems, he emphasizes the influence of mime, that most popular and anarchic of all forms of Roman public entertainment.²⁵ Like the epigrams themselves, the mimic stage was remarkably diverse in its subject matter, with themes ranging from sophisticated parodies of epic, tragedy and philosophical symposia to knockabout farce, sometimes in startling juxtaposition. Promiscuous matrons and rich skinflints rubbed shoulders with such characters as sham philosophers, fake millionaires, even (perhaps significantly) the *kolax* or professional flatterer.²⁶

In keeping with its model, Martial's book adopts a variety of mimic *personae*, at one moment basking in the bravoes of the crowd like the triumphant hero (1.3.7), elsewhere entering the stage dancing, like the *sallator* of mime, and rejecting the moral straightjacket of a toga (2 *prae*f. 8–9). Similarly, though Martial's depiction of his book as a runaway slave (1.3) echoes Horace's use of the analogy (*Ep.* 1.20), both poets are perhaps also relying on their audience's familiarity with the figure of the unscrupulous and impertinent *seruus fugitiuus* from the mimic stage.²⁷

In particular, however, Martial seeks to claim for himself mime's unrivalled enjoyment of freedom from conventions, both social and literary. We are perhaps most familiar with its license for crude language and uncensored sex scenes.²⁸ And Martial was not the first to call upon

²⁵ For the influence of mime on other Roman literary genres, see Fantham (1989); McKeown (1979); Reynolds (1946). On Catullus and mime see Wiseman (1985) 28–30, 187–98; for Petronius see Panayotakis (1995).

²⁶ For some of the characters and themes of mimes, see Fantham (1989) 155–7; McKeown (1979) 71–2. On the *kolax* see Fantham (1989) 156 and Sen. *Q. Nat.* 4a *prae*f. 12.

²⁷ For Seneca's comparison of the appearance of Maecenas with that of a runaway slave in a mime, see *Ep.* 114.6.

²⁸ On the use of prostitutes as performers, stripped naked in the mimes at the Floralia, see Val. Max. 2.10.8; Sen. *Ep.* 97.8.

the obscenity of mime as defense for the indecency of his published verse. Ovid, too, had reminded Augustus of the emperor's tolerance in allowing mockery of his moral reforms while watching mimes in which the *cultus adulter*, the sleek young rake, seduces the deceitful bride of the wealthy but dimwitted old man (*Tr.* 2.497–516).²⁹ So, too, Martial bans any censorious Cato from entering his theatre, that is, his books of epigrams (*non intret Cato theatrum meum*, 1 *praef.* 15); or, if he does enter, he calls on him to actually watch the performance. Similarly, he asks the present-day censor, Domitian, to read the poems with the same forbearance with which he views the mimic performances of Thymele and Latinus:

Qua Thymelen spectas derisoremque Latinum

Illa fronte precor carmina nostra legas.

(Mart. *Ep.* 1.4.5–6).

I pray you to read my poems with the same expression with which you watch Thymele and the mimic mocker Latinus.

In addition to its sexual license, however, celebrations of role reversal, particularly inversions of rank and attacks on authority, were intrinsic to the socially liberated spirit of mime and are equally inherent in Martial's analogy. Seneca notes that in his day mime alone still employed terms that dissolved the distinction between master and slave (*Ep.* 47.14). Highlighting mime's fascination with status inversion, Cicero compares Antony's gross dissipation of the fortune he acquired from Pompey's estate to the character in the mime, *modo egens, repente diues* ("one moment a pauper, the next a millionaire," *Phil.* 2.65). In the same vein, Juvenal describes Fortune's mischievous elevation of foundlings from the gutter to the heights of influence as her own *secretum mimum* ("private mime," *Sat.* 6.608). Along similar lines, the comic appeal of the humiliation of the respectable *paterfamilias* at the hands of his wife's crafty young lover who, like Martial's book, wins bravoos and a bouquet for his deception (*Ov. Tr.* 2.505–6) springs from its depiction of role reversal, with the underling triumphant and the authority figure correspondingly belittled as the *stupidus*. Thus Lucian notes that the common people delight in jesters, especially when they make fun of things that are normally held in reverence (*Pisc.* 25).

²⁹ On the characters of the upstart trickster and the *stupidus* in the adultery mime, see Reynolds (1946) 77–84.

This element of Martial's analogy, while overshadowed by his emphasis on the licensed obscenity of mime and hence largely ignored by modern critics, is nevertheless implicit in his further references to Latinus and the mimic stage. Martial describes the actor as *derisor* ("mimic mocker"), for example, a term that draws attention to the aspect of the mocking jester within the character of the licentious *cultus adulter* (1.4.5). And elsewhere he summarizes the gullibility of a certain Marianus towards his wife and the curly haired young fop who constantly attends her as worthy of the slapping inflicted by Latinus on his mimic counterpart, the *stupidus* Panniculus (5.61). Let us not forget that there was also a long tradition of *derisores* outside the mimic stage, in the imperial palace itself. For instance, Martial mentions Gabba who, along with Sarmentus, had a license for mockery in Augustus' court, as did later the *derisor* Capitolinus in Trajan's (1.41.16; 10.101). Indeed, contemporary audiences would have known Latinus not only as a mime actor but as a particular favorite within Domitian's court, the current representative of that long tradition of *derisores* allowed to indulge an acerbic wit in the palace.³⁰

In broadening the scope of his opening analogy beyond mime, to compare his epigrams also with the spirit of the military triumph, Martial reinforces this combination of licensed obscenity and mocking defiance of the established hierarchy. For Domitian himself, he claims, was not ashamed to be both venerated and reviled, at once triumphant leader and principal target of the scurrilous abuse voiced by the common soldiers (*materiam dictis nec pudet esse ducem*, "nor are you ashamed to be the leading target of their jests," 1.4.4). The kind of jest traditionally aimed at the commander is well illustrated by Suetonius' account of the taunts once directed at Julius Caesar during his Gallic triumph about his sexual misdemeanors (*Iul.* 49). And Dionysius of Halicarnassus describes the soldiers' license in the Roman triumph "to lampoon and mock" (ἰαμβίζειν τε καὶ κατασκώπτειν) their commander as σατυρική παιδία ("satyr-like game playing," 7.72.11).³¹ The Greek

³⁰ Suet. *Dom.* 15 notes Latinus' familiarity with Domitian as his mimic entertainer at dinner. On *derisores* as imperial favourites see Barton (1993) 107–8. It is worth noting that mimes were also employed as *derisores* at funerals. For example, Suet. *Vesp.* 19 mentions that the well-known mime Favor wore a mask of Vespasian at the emperor's funeral and mocked his miserly habits.

³¹ Cf. Wiseman (1988) 10–11.

παῖδιά (“childish play”) is synonymous with Martial’s definition of his epigrams as *lusus* (“games”).

Clearly, the temporary status reversal in the triumph between abuser and abused is no less central to Martial’s analogy than the obscene nature of the abuse itself. And as early as the following poem (1.5), Martial shows his readiness to claim within the confines of his book a similar freedom to ignore or overturn the normal rules of hierarchy. For this whole piece is cheekily put into the mouth of Domitian, complaining that the gift of a book of epigrams is an insultingly meager return for the huge sea battles he stages as public entertainment; and the emperor closes with a jocularly fitting threat that both author and book might end up in the swim. Moreover, he calls Martial by his familiar name, Marcus. Thus, not only does Caesar himself become witty epigrammatist but, momentarily, the great gulf in status between princeps and humble poet disappears as they become equals, able to trade jokes on a “first name” basis. For the emperor has implicitly elevated Martial, like Latinus, to the extraordinary position of court-approved *derisor*. This is what Lorenz means by the term “epigrammatic Caesar,” namely, an emperor as fictionalized in the world of the epigram books as the poet-speaker himself.³²

The next poem (1.6) begins the much discussed series on the theme taken from the arena, of the lion and the hare that most critics are now prepared to read as an allegory, with the lion playing emperor to the hare as Martial.³³ The poet has already set the scene for an Aesopian fable by comparing the dangerously fastidious nose of the collective Roman audience to the horn of a rhinoceros (1.3.5–6) and will juxtapose the first of the lion-hare series with a comparison of Catullus and Stella to sparrow and dove, respectively (1.7). Indeed, at the opening of book 1 Martial might be consciously imitating Phaedrus, Aesop’s successor in Rome.³⁴ For though Martial’s claim not to attack the living by name (1 *prae*f. 1–5) is found also, for example, in Horace (*Sat.* 1.4), it is particularly close to Phaedrus’ statement (3 *prae*f. 49–50), as is his boast to enjoy widespread fame (1.1; cf. Phaed. 2.9.7–11). And,

³² Lorenz (2002) 42, 118–20.

³³ Cf. Holzberg (2002) 65–8; Lorenz (2002) 126–34.

³⁴ Just as he imagines his friend Canius doing at 3.20.5.

like Phaedrus (4.7.21–4), Martial selects Cato as the exemplar of the eternally objectionable critic (1 *praef.* 15–21).³⁵

In the first of the lion-hare poems the tiny hare plays (*ludit*, 1.6.4) in the jaws of *Caesarios... leones* (“Caesar’s lions” 1.6.3), thus embodying the playful games characteristic of the epigrams themselves (cf. *lusus... tuos*, “your games,” 1.3.10). Similarly, as in Caesar’s apparent readiness in 1.5 to join in the epigrammatic fun, so the lions themselves participate in the games and jokes (*lususque iocosque leonum*, 1.14.1), allowing the hare to run unharmed between their teeth. The lion’s nobility even rubs off onto the hare from the latter’s daring entrance into the great beast’s jaws (1.48.4), though the poet notes that the small animal is never endangered. For the lion has been trained only for much larger game and, sated with the blood of those victims, is happy to allow the hare its sport. Indeed, the usual roles are substantially reversed for it is the hare that shows boldness while the lion now timidly respects its tiny adversary. While there may also be a playfully obscene element running through this series, the main focus is the difference in stature between the two animals and the means by which the smaller is enabled to overcome the disadvantage.³⁶ This becomes the feature of 1.60, for example, for here the hare is so insignificant inside the *ampla... ora leonis* (“huge mouth of the lion,” 60.1) that the great beast can not even feel its presence (*esse tamen uacuo se leo dente putat*, “yet the lion thinks its jaws are empty,” 60.2). The hare even tries to bait its adversary but is too miniscule to provoke the lion to a response (*quid frustra nemorum dominum regemque fatigas?*, “Why do you vainly tease the master and king of the forests?” 60.5).³⁷

The elaboration of this fable clearly builds on the analogies used in the book’s opening epigrams. In particular it resumes and develops the notion of status inversion, with the lesser figure amusingly dominating the greater. Like the mime actor and the common soldier of the earlier epigrams, it is the hare that is the *derisor* in this context, winning applause and admiration for his bravado as he outwits and turns the tables on his mightier counterpart. Lorenz argues that these poems are

³⁵ For a more comprehensive list of parallels between Martial and Phaedrus, see Sullivan (1991) 111–2.

³⁶ See Lorenz (2002) 128 and Holzberg (2002) 67 for suggestions that the hare is a phallic symbol.

³⁷ It is worth noting that Martial uses *dominum regemque* (“lord and king”) elsewhere to address patrons (1.112.1).

wholly comic in their purpose, mocking the ridiculous pretensions of the “hare” as much as they flatter the emperor.³⁸ Holzberg similarly concludes that the aim of Martial’s exchange with Domitian in 1.5 and the subsequent lion-hare series is simply to create a playful literary fiction in which “Caesar” is as unreal a character as the narrator.³⁹ Thus we are to take Martial at his word when, as we have seen, he says in the preface to book 1 that his epigrams are simply innocent, even if obscene, games. By comparison Phaedrus, too, claims that his stories are nothing more than jokes set in an entirely fictional context (*fictis iocari nos meminerit fabulis*, “Let him [that is, the critic] remember that my stories are jokes and fictions,” 1 *praef.* 7). Later, however, Phaedrus reveals a more subtle dimension of his poetry by adding that the genre originated as a means whereby *seruitus obnoxia* (“vulnerable servitude,” 3 *praef.* 33) could translate into fable those sentiments it did not dare express openly and so avoid censure with *fictis iocis* (“made-up jokes,” 37). We note also that, like Martial, Phaedrus promotes the ability to overturn normal hierarchies as an intrinsic part of his literary technique. For him, too, his chosen genre offers a certain freedom of expression, allowing the vulnerable writer to voice criticism more safely against those in authority, all under the guise of innocent joking.

Moreover, the fact that the narrator of Martial’s epigrams occasionally presents himself as a comic or mimic caricature is no guarantee that the poems lack a more serious vein of criticism. For in mime too the *derisor* could sometimes be comically humiliated, in spite of his superior cleverness. As Barton notes of the characters of *derisor* and *stupidus*, the “mime and, especially, the domestic buffoon often played both these roles alternately.”⁴⁰ Thus the abrasive Augustan *scurra* (“jester”) Sarmentus could himself become the butt of humor (e.g., Hor. *Sat.* 1.5.51–70) just as his fellow Augustan, Gabba, could be for Martial an exemplar of superior wit (1.41.16) yet for Juvenal (5.3) an object of ridicule, representative of the indignities suffered by the lowly client at the table of an arrogant patron.⁴¹ Martial’s personified book itself alternates between both roles, at one moment thrilling the audience with its cleverness, like the mimic *derisor*, at another tossed humiliatingly into the air from a blanket, like a laughable *stupidus* (1.3.7–8). Thus, just as Martial often

³⁸ Lorenz (2002) 134.

³⁹ Holzberg (2002) 67.

⁴⁰ Barton (1993) 174.

⁴¹ On the figure of the *scurra* see Nauta (2002) 178–9.

turns his humor against himself so the Roman audience was used to social and theatrical settings where the mocker became the mocked, the ridiculing *derisor* made to look ridiculous.

Yet however farcical and indiscriminate this kind of humor might appear, it did not prevent the comic theater, and mime in particular, from commenting incisively on the current political scene. Cicero, for example, writing from exile, asks Atticus for details of the *mimorum dicta* ("speeches of the mime actors," *Att.* 14.3.2) as a gauge of public opinion. Elsewhere he remarks that the feelings of the Roman people in public affairs are expressed most clearly at public meetings, assemblies and gatherings for plays and gladiatorial shows (*Sest.* 106). And he goes on to provide copious instances of the audience's alertness to any allusions in the play's performance that could be applied to the contemporary political situation (118–24). Nor did the change from republic to principate put an end to mime's penchant for political satire. Suetonius recounts, for example, the sexual innuendoes directed from the comic stage at Augustus (*Aug.* 68) and later at Tiberius (*Tib.* 45); later still, Galba was subjected to the mockery of actors and audience during the performance of an Atellan farce (*Galba* 13). In short, despite its predominant obscenity and the apparent flippancy and randomness of its humor, mocking all and sundry from the hero to his adversaries, the mimic theater clearly also continued to incorporate a vein of sharp political satire to which its audience was keenly sensitive.⁴²

Martial's second volume features only three epigrams (2, 91, 92) about the emperor, though they are placed conspicuously at the beginning and end of the book. While the first has all the formality expected of an imperial panegyric, the other two combine to produce a humorously frivolous tone, making light of the emperor's gift. In 2.91 Martial formulates a solemn request to Domitian for the granting of the *ius trium liberorum* ("rights of three children"), as reward for whatever pleasure his books have given and solace for the offspring that nature has denied him.⁴³ No sooner sought than bestowed, for in 2.92 he announces receipt in recognition, he boasts, of his own gift of the Muses. The poem is simultaneously encomium, honoring the emperor as *domini* ("master," 4),

⁴² See Reynolds (1943) 37–45.

⁴³ Martial says elsewhere (3.95.5–6) that this privilege had been gifted to him by two emperors, presumably Titus and Domitian. And since Domitian endorsed *en bloc* his late brother's grants (Cass. Dio 67.2.1) we can reasonably doubt that Martial actually made an individual petition to him such as he pretends in 2.91.

and comic parody of the original purpose of such a gift, with the speaker now cheerfully looking forward to being able to dismiss his wife (or perhaps the very thought of a wife). Thus, he claims, his master's gift will not be wasted.

On the topic of marriage the epigram also recalls 2.90 in which the poet justifies to Quintilian his rejection of a public career by listing the pleasures of an untroubled (though humble) rustic existence, including a *non doctissima coniunx* ("not too clever wife," 9). Again on the issue of intent, one recent commentator sees no reason why we should not take 2.90 as a sincere statement, given the multitude of similar avowals in other epigrams.⁴⁴ For another, however, the poem is simply a further representation of an amusing but wholly fictional *persona*.⁴⁵ There might well be a deliberately humorous contrast here between the urbane poet and his supposed rustic ideal. But his images in 2.90 of an impoverished but peaceful country life, of a humble hearth, agreeable household and peaceful sleep had by now become emblematic not only of the choice of poetry as a career rather than something more civic-minded but, more precisely, of personal poetry in preference to the loftier genres.⁴⁶ In that sense this epigram is part of a more subtle and serious exposition of poetic values and practice rather than wholly an entertaining fiction. For it continues the themes of 2.86 in which Martial contrasts his own plainly robust style with the effeminate intricacies of other poets, and 2.89 in which he attacks the debased habits and uninspired poetry of Gaurus, an epic poet and apparent detractor of Martial's verse.⁴⁷ The theme culminates, of course, in 2.91–2 in which the emperor himself is recruited as "proof" that Martial's choices are endorsed at the highest level. Besides their witty parody of petition and panegyric, 2.91–2 also have a less playful role in a more extended context affirming, like the preceding epigrams, Martial's position within the literary community.

There are, perhaps, further interpretive possibilities for 2.91–2 if we follow Fitzgerald's suggestion that the epigrams are also linked to the book's final poem (2.93).⁴⁸ Here Regulus is portrayed as asking where

⁴⁴ Williams (2004) 270–1.

⁴⁵ Lorenz (2002) 20–1.

⁴⁶ E.g., Pers. 1.71–82; Tib. 1.1.5–49; Hor. *Epod.* 2.23–66, *Carm.* 2.18.28.

⁴⁷ Cf. 9.50 and Garthwaite (1998b) 167–70.

⁴⁸ Fitzgerald (2007) 135–8.

is the first book if this is the second.⁴⁹ Martial replies by saying that this volume can easily be transformed into the first by dropping one iota from the title of book “ii”, if Regulus so prefers (*tu tamen hunc fieri si mauis, Regule, primum*, “but if you prefer this one to become the first, Regulus,” 93.3). As Fitzgerald notes, Martial’s point is that appearances can easily be manipulated to form a new “reality” and, from that perspective, the epigram echoes his request in 2.91 that the emperor create the belief that the poet is a father of three, though this can not become so in fact:

quod fortuna uetet fieri, permitte uideri
natorum genitor credar ut esse trium.

(Mart. 2.91.5–6)

Allow in appearance what fortune forbids from happening, that I be
believed to be the father of three children.

But this, in turn, recalls Martial’s statement at the beginning of the epigram that Domitian’s continuing safety engenders belief that the gods really do exist (*sospite quo magnos credimus esse deos*, “whose safety makes us believe that the great gods exist,” 91.2). Is this belief, however, any more credible in context than that which holds Martial to be the father of three, or considers book 2 to be book 1? Is Martial suggesting that appearances are no more reliable on the imperial stage than in the world of the epigrams?

Book 3 is equally sly and perhaps even more problematic in its intentions. This volume lacks any imperial dedication, a singular omission in Martial’s numbered books.⁵⁰ But the imperial theme itself is not absent. Rather, the emperor’s role is given to an upstart colonial shoemaker, Cerdo (“Cobbler”; cf. Herod. 7) by name and profession, who expends vast sums on staging gladiatorial games (3.16), clearly aping the great show-giver of book 1. Indeed, Martial presses the imperial parallel by designating Cerdo as *sutorum regule* (“little king of cobblers,” 3.16.1).⁵¹ And he draws further attention to this substitution by resuming the

⁴⁹ Either Regulus had received a copy of book 2 but not of book 1 or, more likely, the first book had been given no number, unlike the subsequent volumes (cf. Williams [2004] 281–2).

⁵⁰ Martial wrote book 3 in Cisalpine Gaul (3.1) but this absence from Rome would not in itself explain the lack of imperial dedication since book 12, written in Spain, opens with several imperial panegyrics. Nauta (2002) 377 suggests Martial’s disillusionment with the city and Domitian’s court as a reason.

⁵¹ This *regule* (“little king”) seems as keen as his namesake Regulus at the end of the previous book to reshape reality.

topic in the penultimate epigram of the book (3.99), where the reader would expect a closing acknowledgement to the emperor as in book 2. Instead, the poet addresses Cerdo again, asking him to forego his anger towards the book for it is only his profession, not his character that has been attacked. Indeed, if Cerdo can stage his own games (*lusisti*, “you have played,” 3.16.5) then Martial can be allowed his own sport (*cur ludere nobis/non liceat*, “why should I not be allowed to play?,” 3.99.3–4). Thus the poet bids Cerdo *innocuos permitte sales* (“allow my innocuous jests,” 3.99.3). Like the penultimate epigram of book 2, this too is a parody, playing on the theme of censorship that Martial had broached, apparently so nervously, in 1.4. There he had asked the emperor to set aside the stern expression that rules the world, noting *innocuos censura potest permittere lusus* (“your censorship can permit innocuous jokes,” 1.4.7).

The obvious target of the speaker’s wit in book 3 is Cerdo. Yet the replacement of the emperor in the volume by an upstart cobbler and bestowal on him of the all-powerful *ensoria potestas* (“censorial authority”), along with the speaker’s mocking plea to him in this capacity, suggests a surprisingly dismissive if not sarcastic attitude to what we would suppose to be a sensitive issue for poet and emperor alike. This in a book containing the largest block of blatantly obscene epigrams in the corpus; indeed, Martial singles it out as the centerpiece of the volume (3.68; 3.86). The juxtaposition of these elements takes aim at an aspect of his administration that commentators both ancient and modern agree Domitian treated earnestly, to say the least.⁵²

Although even delicate areas of imperial concern are not beyond the scope of Martial’s satirical wit, few critics would entertain any possibility of irony or sarcasm lurking within his courtly panegyrics. Fitzgerald perhaps reflects most succinctly a scholarly consensus in speaking of “the non-sincerity of Martial’s compliments and insults” that “does not put real feelings at issue.”⁵³ On this view, virtually indistinguishable from that of Holzberg and Lorenz, Martial’s jibes are as free of critical sentiment as his encomia are devoid of genuine emotion. It is all an innocuous game, as the poet himself tries to impress upon his audience.

I have suggested previously that in book 6 (2–4) Martial introduces the image of the deceased Julia, Domitian’s niece and rumored mistress,

⁵² Cf. Sullivan (1991) 29.

⁵³ Fitzgerald (2007) 114–5.

in a context potentially fraught with irony, namely the emperor's revival of the Augustan laws punishing adultery.⁵⁴ Martial further portrays Julia holding, now in the heavenly court, the key to the affections of the Olympian ruler, Jupiter, as well as of Mars (6.13). This is the *cestos* ("girdle") that Juno and Venus herself must reclaim from Julia if they wish to regain the fidelity of their wayward husbands. I have likewise suggested that in book 9 the birthday poems to Domitian's *delicatus* ("pet slave"), the castrated Earinus, are suspiciously at odds with Martial's accompanying celebrations of the emperor's law forbidding castration (9. 5; 9.7; 9.12–3; 9.16–7; 9.36).⁵⁵

Both suggestions have been strongly opposed, one commentator labeling them "preposterous."⁵⁶ For Grewing the issue comes down to "common sense," which presumably dictates that any intentional irony on the author's part is inconceivable.⁵⁷ Yet the leader's rumored sex life, especially any allegedly scandalous aspect, was precisely the subject of the taunts of the rank and file at the triumph, as well as a target for humor in mime and Atellan farce. Nor were their jibes wrapped carefully in hyperbolic eulogy such as we find in Martial.

Another feature of book 9, commemoration of Domitian's building program, has aroused less critical dissension though I think it can still usefully inform debate about authorial intention. The topic is foreshadowed in three epigrams of book 8 (36, 65, 80) but is nowhere more prominent than in book 9 where it is signaled at the outset as a major part of the volume's imperial theme (1, 3). Domitian was an energetic builder engaging in what Jones describes as "a massive and spectacular programme of public building equalled by hardly any other emperor."⁵⁸ Like each previous princeps, Domitian's aim was, at least in part, to glorify the current regime at the expense of his predecessors. But such self-promotion could easily backfire. As Elsner has noted, the growing tendency among its contemporaries to define a reign by its architecture "was tinged with ambiguity, even paradox."⁵⁹ For commentators and commons alike the scale and nature of the emperor's building activity

⁵⁴ Garthwaite (1990) 13–22. On Julia and Domitian see Suet. *Dom.* 22; Plin. *Ep.* 4.11.6, *Pan.* 52.3, 63.7; Juv. 2.29–33; Cass. Dio 67.3.2. On the scope of the law see Nauta (2002) 298–9.

⁵⁵ Garthwaite (1993) 78–102.

⁵⁶ Henriksen (1998) 18; see also Lorenz (2002) 153–62, 191–8.

⁵⁷ Grewing (2003) 1058.

⁵⁸ Jones (1992) 79.

⁵⁹ Elsner (1994) 115. See also Malamud, pp. 303–6.

became a measure of his personality and relationship with his subjects in a negative as well as positive sense. Vast expenditure on such projects could be seen as a sign of greatness and munificence or of luxury and decadence.

Thus, in *Spectacula* 2, Martial contrasts the generosity and public spirit of the present regime with the selfish extravagance of Nero in terms of buildings such as the Flavian amphitheater that now stand in place of Nero's Golden House. Many years later, of course, he would shift his perspective to contrast the *delicias grauesque luxus* ("the follies and oppressive luxuries," 12.15.5) of Domitian with the altruism of his successor. Similarly Pliny (*Pan.* 51–2) uses expenditure on building to highlight Trajan's moderation compared with Domitian's extravagance. While Plutarch describes the latter's zeal for construction as a νόσος ("disease," *Publ.* 15.5). Even during Domitian's reign one bilingual wit scrawled *ARCI* on one of the emperor's numerous new triumphal arches—though in Greek script, thus signifying "that's enough" (*Suet. Dom.* 13).

Imperial building activity was clearly a sensitive topic and commentary on it consistently charged with the possibility of sharply differing interpretations. Without assuming too much about audience response we can reasonably suggest that Martial's praise of the cost and volume of Domitian's architectural projects provided ready material for an ironic reading. And what of the poet's own sentiments in introducing the theme in 9.3 with the joke that even Jupiter is too poor to repay the emperor should he be called upon to reimburse the vast outlay on temples? This gives every appearance of another comically flippant throwaway, simultaneously compliment and jest. Later, however, Martial seems to cast 9.3 in a less positive light. For in 12.15 he notes that the opening by Caesar (Nerva or Trajan) to public display in Jupiter's temple of Domitian's once hoarded treasures has made both the people and Jupiter wealthy (1–8). But previously, he concludes, *omnes cum Ioue pauperes eramus* ("we were all poor along with Jupiter," 10). The postscript seems deliberately to echo 9.3, explicating what that poem had left unsaid but suggesting that the inference had been available for the reader to draw.

Further, Martial takes the theme of building in book 9 in an unusual direction. Only in this volume does he cite it as an example of patrons' selfish indulgence and as yet another of their flimsy excuses not to support their clients. So, in 9.22, he assures his patron that he asks for money not to furnish for himself the usual luxuries of the acquisitive

rich but rather *ut donem, Pastor, et aedificem* (“so I can present gifts, Pastor, and erect buildings,” 16). He thus sarcastically throws back in their face the reasons patrons give for not giving. Similarly, he notes in 9.46 that Gellius’ frenetic (and very public) building activities are motivated by the desire to use them as an excuse to deny any requests for money.

Martial adds still another dimension to the topic in book 9 with a request to the emperor for the right to build a private water supply to his house in the city (9.18).⁶⁰ Elsewhere in his epigrams only at 2.91 does he make an equally specific petition (for the rights of three children) rather than a vague plea for imperial support. The differences as well as the parallels between the two contexts are instructive. Granted, 9.18 is hardly more likely than 2.91 to function as an actual petition but, possibly, communicates to a wider audience a formal submission already presented via other means. Yet it is difficult to see this epigram as a piece of playful epigrammatic theater such as one might assume of 2.91 or such as we find in 6.10 where Martial also contrasts the scale of Domitian’s building projects (the new temple to Jupiter) with his own lack of support from the emperor. In 6.10 he casts himself in the role of gullible *stupidus* (*stulte*, “fool,” as Minerva remarks at 10.12), considering the smallness of his request as the reason for it being overlooked while describing (as if he had been present) the kindly countenance with which his own Jupiter (the emperor) read his petition (10.1–6).⁶¹

In 9.18, however, there is no sign of a fictionalized speaker or a jesting mime; nor of a humorously complaisant Caesar. Nor is this poem followed by an acknowledgement, cheekily dismissive or otherwise, of imperial generosity in the form of request granted.⁶² Indeed, the subject is never mentioned again. Instead, Martial appends to 9.18 a terse but telling assessment of the aims of a fellow poet who praises the bath-house of a patron who happens also to enjoy lavish dinners (9.19). Praise from a poet-client is never altruistic but one side of a reciprocal deal between client and patron. As Martial puts it, *uis cenare*,

⁶⁰ Cf. Henriksen (1998) 114–7.

⁶¹ Even so, Martial follows 6.10 with an epigram (6.11) berating a patron for expecting loyalty from his client to whom he gives scraps while he dines in style.

⁶² The omission has led some commentators to the unlikely conjecture that such a vote of thanks was excised from our surviving edition of book 10, revised after Domitian’s assassination; cf. Watson and Watson (2003) 113. The fact that Statius, a poet whom Martial possibly saw as a rival (see Sullivan [1991] 114), had been granted a water supply to his Alban estate (see *Silv.* 3.1.61–3) adds weight to the idea that Martial’s request was in earnest.

Sabelle, non lauari ("you're after a dinner, Sabellus, not a bath," 19.3). Not coincidentally, surely, these epigrams are enclosed by imperial eulogies of Domitian's *delicatus* Earinus (9.16–7) and the newly built Flavian temple (9.20). Nor is it illogical for Martial to place an apparently serious request alongside a poem such as 9.22, castigating patrons for spending on building while ignoring their social commitments to the patron-client exchange. If anything the collocation hints at his expectations; significantly, 4.27 is the last occasion when he acknowledges receipt of imperial benefaction.

Martial's treatment of the imperial building program in book 9 and particularly his implicit equation of the emperor with self-indulgent but selfish patrons (his favorite targets for abuse) are surely incompatible with the notion of the epigrams as playfully abstract theater. The elaborations of the theme hint rather at a more keenly felt, personal tone of irony and sarcasm. Recent explorations, however, try quite literally to define Martial's imperial poems by limiting the interpretive possibilities of the text. On this view the society of the epigrams, especially those concerning the emperor, is a wholly fictional creation in which neither the poet-*persona* nor the ruler have a reality beyond the poems. It is therefore misguided to seek to transfer sentiments and situations from this artificial environment to the real world. In this epigrammatic theater of manners there exists a mutual understanding between writer and reader that expressions of sentiment running the gamut from praise to abuse are abstractions to be appreciated for their cleverness and wit rather than underpinned by genuine emotion. "Over-interpretation" has become a fashionable term to use against readers who propose to extend critical assessment of the imperial poems into more contentious areas of authorial intent.⁶³

Undoubtedly, Martial does take inspiration from dramatic fiction, especially mime with its lively obscenity and amorality, far-fetched role reversals, and histrionic caricature of real-life individuals and situations. Like the mimic *derisor* from whom he takes his lead in particular, our epigrammatic narrator assumes a multitude of disguises, sometimes becoming as much the butt of humor as those he belittles and presenting the "authentic" Martial in a bizarre medley of personalities, often contradictory. Yet there are moments, however fleeting, when the actual author appears without subterfuge or pretense. And just as this narrator

⁶³ E.g., Henriksen (1998) 19; Spisak (2007) 1.

occasionally removes his many masks to allow the reader a glimpse of Martial the individual in terms of social situation and standing, so he interlaces his fictionalised interactions with expressions of genuine sentiment. Similarly, despite its seeming refusal to take itself or anything else seriously, mime could still offer pointed commentary on the political scene, a feature appreciated by an audience alive to every possible nuance. As Nicolet observes, Roman audiences were highly sensitive to word play and allusion, as well as to the most obscure references.⁶⁴ Moreover, we tend to ignore how ubiquitous mockery was in Roman life, from the stage to the Saturnalia, the dining room to the funeral.⁶⁵ We should be ever mindful, too, that the boundary between praise and mockery is deceptively porous. Seneca, for example, describes Satellius Quadratus as *stultorum divitum adrosor et quod sequitur, adrisor et quod duobus his adiunctum est derisor* ("a feeder on foolish millionaires and, it follows, a flatterer of them and a mocker of them too, since this goes along with the first two," *Ep.* 27.7).

By the same token, distinctions between the poet and his many *personae* are not invariably delineated. As with praise and sarcasm, the frivolous and the serious are not always readily distinguishable. Martial stresses that his epigrams are merely innocent games (e.g., 1 *praef.*; 7.12.9), a reading endorsed in recent scholarship. I believe that the books are more challenging and oblique. However varied and playful his gamesmanship, the crafty revelation of a compromising truth with a laugh or a compliment, even if the subject is Caesar, is also part of the satirist's mimic repertoire.

⁶⁴ Nicolet (1980) 366–73. Cf. also Edwards (1993) 119.

⁶⁵ On the Saturnalian spirit and background of the epigrams, see Citroni (1989) 201–26.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

READING THE PRINCE: TEXTUAL POLITICS IN TACITUS AND PLINY

Steven H. Rutledge

A History of the Question

Among our ancient Roman authors few are as sensitive to the plasticity of language as is Tacitus. Words, text, meaning, and the ability to interpret them count among his chief concerns in his historical works, in particular the *Annales*. Both he and the younger Pliny, his contemporary, were equally aware that texts had the potential for negatively charged political commentary and that an author—particularly of history—needed to proceed with caution. All of the genres in which both authors worked, be it history, rhetorical dialogue, biography, panegyric, epistles, ethnographic treatise or history, were by nature political. In addition, such texts were designed in one form or another to instruct readers on how men of their class were expected to prepare for a life of government service, and how to govern and comport themselves in the political life of the empire. Tacitus' historical works, the *Annales* and *Historiae*, have been excavated over time for Tacitus' opinion concerning the institution of the principate and how that institution compared with the republic which had preceded it: how did Tacitus feel about the principate and the Augustan settlement? How did it compare with the republic? How did he define the *libertas* he so apparently cherished? How could one best serve the *res publica* under the current system, in both good times and bad? All of these questions have been asked in varying form by scholars over the past half-century or more.¹ Less frequently has the opinion over these same questions been asked of the younger Pliny.²

It has, therefore, long since been noted that Tacitus' very subject matter constitutes a commentary on current politics, though the recovery of his opinions is not easy, since his language and presentation are often clouded by ambiguity and doublespeak. Still more difficult

¹ See, e.g., Shotter (1991) 3263–328; Morford (1991) 3420–50.

² See Hammond (1938) 115–40.

is the recovery of Tacitean opinion within the text concerning the sitting *principes* under whom he wrote, Nerva, Trajan, and Hadrian. Despite his promise to do so (*Hist.* 1.1), Tacitus leaves no trace of a history of the reigns of Nerva or Trajan. Thus far, however, only a small number of scholars have addressed the possibilities for dissidence within Tacitus' works. Syme was the first and most famous in 1958, when he suggested that a sub-text of criticism against Hadrian could be read into Tacitus' *Annales*.³ His argument assumed that the *Annales* were composed after Hadrian had come to power, and that Tiberius' succession of Augustus mirrored Hadrian's own: Hadrian had had four *consulares* murdered just as Tiberius had Agrippa Postumus; Livia had seen to securing the army and posting bulletins during Augustus' last illness to smooth Tiberius' accession, just as Plotina, Trajan's widow, had assisted Hadrian through secret machinations. Hadrian too was a philhellene, as was Nero, with the implication that Hadrian sinisterly mirrored his infamous forebear. Syme argued that in a society where free speech was not possible, Tacitus, in an effort to offer a critique of the current *princeps*, introduced this sub-text into his work. Reaction to Syme's thesis was mixed: Goodyear was a harsh critic of Syme's reading, though more recently Birley has accepted and integrated Syme's theory into his biography of Hadrian.⁴ It was not until many years after Syme that Bartsch, in her study on theatricality and doublespeak in the early principate, suggested that Tacitus in fact explored the possibility for dissidence in the *Dialogus*, where Maternus, the poetic protagonist of the dialogue at whose house the conversation takes place, explores poetry as a medium for free speech, making the *Dialogus* itself (indirectly) an instrument of political protest.⁵ Since Bartsch it has been a question I have also explored, attempting to elucidate the instability of meaning in Tacitus' *Annales* and the implications for the contemporary political scene.⁶ Tacitus' contemporary, Pliny, has received less attention in this regard, though Bartsch (again) has now given an excellent contribution in this area by looking at how Pliny's *Panegyricus*, through the rhetorical strategies of ambiguity and doublespeak, acted as a two-edged sword

³ Syme (1958) 481–5, 517–9.

⁴ See Goodyear (1972) 127–8, 183–4; Birley (1997) 5, 9, 14, 78, 83, 88, 95, 108, 116, 173, 313, 326, 330; in the interim, Ahl (1984a) 174–208 published his article that examined specifically the methodologies of “safe” criticism in Greece and Rome.

⁵ See Bartsch (1994) 98–147.

⁶ See Rutledge (1998) 141–59.

for interpreting the nature of the current political milieu.⁷ This chapter will attempt to build on previous work by examining the literary forms in which Tacitus and Pliny worked, considering the rhetorical methodologies they employ and the potential for readings critical of the current political environment that the interaction between language and literary form offers.⁸

The Function of the Literary Form: Some General Remarks

By its very nature ancient history was intended to influence in some way the political behavior of the historian's audience. The literary form therefore could not help but to constitute a commentary on current politics: how to best function and how not to function in a particular political environment was its purported object lesson. Livy in his *praefatio* stated as much: *inde tibi tuaeque rei publicae quod imitere capias, inde foedum inceptu foedum exitu quod uites* ("hence you might have something to take which you can imitate for your country, from which you might avoid that which is foul in its inception, foul in its outcome," 1 *praef.* 10). Before him Sallust implicitly had the same intent (as we see in the introductions of his two monographs, *Cat.* 1–4; *Iug.* 4). History was also a field in which political competition played itself out. As was the case with the cityscape of Rome itself, where Roman grandees competed to build *monumenta* ("memorials") in the form of temples, basilicas and theaters, history too was a *monumentum* (see Cic. *Fam.* 5.12; Tac. *Agr.* 2, cf. 46) in which, at least during the republic, men such as Cicero, Caesar, and Sulla competed for glory in what we might call a competitive narrative environment. The case was similar, though with some obvious changes, in Tacitus' day (see *Agr.* 2). Tacitus, after all, was interested in putting forward the claims of the senate which competed with those of the omnipotent *princeps*. To that end, he was interested in instructing senators on how to comport themselves under the principate, to show that there could be exemplary behavior even in the worst of times (see *Agr.* 42; cf. *Hist.* 1.3). Above all, he intended to put *uirtus* on display and make contemporaries fearful of *infamia* (see *Ann.* 3.65).⁹ That Tacitus

⁷ See Bartsch (1994) 148–87.

⁸ On Tacitus and Pliny see also Dominik (2007b) 323–38, esp. 327–9 for a discussion on politics and oratory.

⁹ For discussion of this passage, see Luce (1991) 2904–27.

may have, like Caesar and Cicero before him, had his detractors, is indicated by his *apologia* (“defense”) in the *Agricola*, and his assertion of objectivity in the *Historiae*, which arguably reads like a preemptive defense (though assertions of objectivity were certainly *de rigueur*).¹⁰ The case was no different for Sallust, whose disingenuous shock at the corruption of the present day impelled his own withdrawal from political life (*Cat.* 3–4). The tradition of authorial *apologia* was long-standing: in the late republic Aemilius Scaurus, Rutilius Rufus, and Sulla all wrote their memoirs presumably to justify their careers, while Caesar’s *commentarii* with their attempts to explain his actions in the Gallic and civil wars stand as the most famous. The subject of Cicero’s proposed history in his letter to Luceius (*Fam.* 5.12), encompassing the period from his consulship up until his return from exile, was no doubt intended to address the controversial actions he took during the Catilinarian conspiracy. Livy, standing outside of politics, had no need for an *apologia*; however, to say he stood entirely outside the political realm would be a difficult assertion to defend, since, as noted above, his work did enter into the political conversation of the times. Praise of virtue, condemnation of *infamia*, application of history’s lessons in service to the state, a field of competition amongst rivals, justification of one’s own political career—historical writing and its generic components were *de facto* an extension of the Roman political field.

*Critically Analyzing the Principate:
Scrolling Down the Princeps*

Perhaps one of the most striking aspects of Tacitus’ narrative in the *Annales*’ first hexad is that the *princeps* himself, Tiberius, constitutes a meta-text, one that is, like Tacitus’ Latin, ambiguous and difficult to read.¹¹ The unhappy result, to borrow O’Gorman’s phrase, is misinterpretation and misreading by the senate.¹² Consider simply the commencement of Tiberius’ reign when Tacitus summarizes Tiberius’ career up until 14 CE and describes the scene of succession in the sen-

¹⁰ Though they are themselves problematic. See Fornara (1983) 99–104; Luce (1989) 16–31; for a more theoretical and modern approach to the problem, see Potter (1999) 126–8.

¹¹ For a discussion of the emperor as text, see Rutledge (1998) 144–5; for an excellent discussion of Tiberius as a text see O’Gorman (2000) 78–105.

¹² See O’Gorman (2000) 81–9 for a general discussion of “misreading” specific to Tiberius.

ate.¹³ He there notes Tiberius' initial presentation by Augustus as his successor when he requests *tribunicia potestas* for him: *quamquam honora oratione, quaedam de habitu cultuque et institutis eius iecerat, quae uelut excusando exprobraret* ("although the speech was honorable, he let fly certain things about his disposition, mode of life and manners which he reproached as it were by defending," *Ann.* 1.10). The oration appears to have been generally complimentary to Tiberius (*honora*), but, as Tacitus presents it, even those things that were a matter for defensive explanation he turns into a condemnation. The use of the verb *excusare* combined with *uelut* qualifies Augustus' motivation: *excusare* ("to defend") is not necessarily to condemn or reproach (*exprobrare*), and the *uelut* ("as if") imposes an intent on Augustus which Tacitus could not have known. It also implies an effect on the senate that he could only ascertain through anecdotal or hostile accounts. Hence from Tiberius' very introduction as a potential successor he becomes a text in which the ostensible "subject" offers a variety of interpretations: has he been defended or has he been reproached? How are we to read his *habitus, cultus et instituta* ("disposition, way of life, and manners")? This problematic reading of the *princeps* will continue throughout his administration.

At the outset of his reign Tiberius issues a statement to the senate concerning how he intends to govern:

se in partem curarum ab illo uocatum experiendo didicisse quam arduum, quam subiectum fortunae regendi cuncta onus. proinde in ciuitate tot inlustribus uiris subnixa ad unum omnia deferrent; plures facilius munia rei sociatis laboribus exsecuturos.

(*Tac. Ann.* 1.11)

Having been called to share in the cares of Augustus, he had learned by experience how difficult, how subjected to fortune was the burden of one governing all things. Therefore, in a state that relied on so many outstanding men, let them not confer all things to one man; more would carry out the duties of the state more easily if the work were shared.

Now the subsequent reign of Tiberius, as presented in our sources, bears out the sincerity of Tiberius' statement: he in fact tried to grant the senate greater autonomy than the senate was at times willing to accept in light of Augustus' "micro-managing". According to Tacitus, however, the senate refused to accept Tiberius at face value: *plus in oratione tali dignitatis quam fidei erat* ("there was more dignity in his oration than credibility," *Ann.* 1.11). And why? Because Tiberius, as O'Gorman

¹³ For an excellent discussion of the scene, see Woodman (1998) 40–69.

has noted in her discussion of this passage, was quite literally, according to Tacitus, a difficult text to read:¹⁴

...Tiberioque etiam in rebus quas non occulteret, seu natura siue adsuetudine, suspensa semper et obscura uerba: tunc uero nitenti, ut sensus suos penitus abderet, in incertum et ambiguum magis implicabantur.

(Tac. *Ann.* 1.11)

...Tiberius' words were always ambiguous and obscure whether by nature or habit even in matters which he did not hide: then, to be sure, striving utterly to conceal his own meaning, they were wound up the more in uncertainty and ambiguity.

Indeed, Tacitus attempts to drive home his assertion by relating an anecdote where one senator tried to interpret Tiberius' words at the first senate meeting after Augustus' funeral:

...dixit forte Tiberius se ut non toti rei publicae parem, ita quaecumque pars sibi mandaretur, eius tutelam suscepturum. Tum Asinius Gallus, "interrogo," inquit, "Caesar, quam partem rei publicae mandari tibi uelis?"

(Tac. *Ann.* 1.12)

...Tiberius said by chance that he was not equal to the entire republic, so whatever part would be entrusted to him, he would undertake its guardianship. Then Asinius Gallus said, "I ask, Caesar, which part of the republic do you want to be entrusted to you?"

An embarrassed Tiberius answered, *nequaquam decorum pudori suo legere aliquid aut euitare ex eo, cui in uniuersum excusari mallet* ("by no means was it honorable according to his own modesty to choose or to avoid anything from that which, on the whole, he preferred to be excused," *Ann.* 1.12). Gallus persisted in his misreading, however, when he tried to clarify, understanding by his remark that Tiberius admitted that *unum esse rei publicae corpus atque unius animo regendum* ("the state was of a single body and ought to be ruled by a single mind," 1.10). The rest of Tiberius' reign, were we to examine it, would present us with a series of senatorial hermeneutics frequently—as was the case with Gallus' attempts to interpret the *princeps*—off the mark. From the trial of Caepio Crispinus (*Ann.* 1.74) to proposals that he be called *pater patriae* (*Ann.* 1.72) to the execution of Clutorius Priscus (*Ann.* 3.49–51), Tiberius afforded Tacitus a particular example of the *princeps qua* text which, as he remarks, was nearly impossible to interpret: *Tiberius artem quoque callebat qua uerba expen-*

¹⁴ See O'Gorman (2000) 88–9 for discussion.

deret, tum ualidus sensibus aut consulto ambiguus ("Tiberius was also practiced in the art [of oratory] in which he considered his words, now was strong in his meaning, now deliberately ambiguous," *Ann.* 13.3).¹⁵

The lesson was an important one for Tacitus, Pliny, and their (presumably) senatorial audience. As participants in public life, reading the ambiguities of both a *princeps'* demeanor and a historical text was an important skill, one for which their own reading practices helped prepare them and of which they were keenly self-aware. Having discussed this matter elsewhere, only a brief summary is required.¹⁶ Pliny, for one, had refused to write history (though as we shall later see, this refusal is somewhat ambiguous), aware that his treatment of recent times could potentially give offense (*Ep.* 5.8).¹⁷ Was Pliny thinking of the actual subject matter of the history as giving offense, or did he have in mind that the audience might read a dissident meaning into the text? He is not explicit, though, as we shall see, it may not have mattered much. Tacitus, on the other hand, was more clear. He made evident his understanding that his history could be understood as a commentary on the present: *reperies qui ob similitudinem morum aliena malefacta sibi obiectari putent etiam gloria ac uirtus infensos habet, ut nimis ex propinquo diuersa arguens* ("you will find those who think that the misdeeds of others, on account of the similarity of their character, are cast against them as accusations. Even glory and virtue have enemies, since they accuse their opposites from too close a contrast," *Ann.* 4.33). Tacitus was also aware that history and notable figures, almost by their very nature, invite comparison with other historical situations. Hence at the funeral of Augustus he notes the empty comparisons the plebs make in contrast to the *prudentes* (*Ann.* 1.9): that Augustus had accepted his first public office and died on the same dates; that he died in the same room of the same house as his father at Nola; that his consulships equaled the number of those held by M. Valerius Corvus and C. Marius.¹⁸ A more sophisticated parsing of Augustus' rule (by the *prudentes*) follows (*Ann.* 1.9–10). What all of this

¹⁵ The same could be said of Domitian, whose secretive demeanor Tacitus notes on a number of occasions (see *Hist.* 4.86; *Ag.* 40, 42, 45) and which needs parsing to understand the true nature of Roman power.

¹⁶ See Rutledge (1998) 143–5.

¹⁷ Pliny could cite in one letter (9.27) the embarrassment caused to one individual by the reader of a history.

¹⁸ Compare the death of Germanicus at *Ann.* 2.73, where Tacitus notes some contemporaries who compared him to Alexander the Great; see Rutledge (1998) 144 with n. 15 for discussion.

implies is that there were a variety of hermeneutics applied to historical texts beyond the basic narrative; whether an author intended it or not, their work was subject to an alternative version created by the audience, one that commented on the present through the past. Tacitus' depiction of the funeral of Augustus, however, has some infelicitous implications for subsequent emperors. It was only a generation or two after Tacitus' death that the senate greeted new *principes* with "may you be luckier than Augustus, better than Trajan". If Augustus' principate was not above critical analysis, even harsh reproach, then no *princeps* (even the sitting one) could expect to escape history's harsh judgment.

Tacitus, Agricola, and Nerva

Yet for Tacitus, it was not simply a matter of how an audience could interpret or read the content. As noted above, the very literary form, both in his history and in his other works, invited assessment in light of current politics. Now Tacitus' apparent view of the republic is not easy to retrieve and is somewhat ambiguous.¹⁹ As has been noted by other scholars, however, his (possibly) earliest work, the *Agricola*, contains intertextual elements in common with an important republican forebear: *clarorum uirorum facta* ("the deeds of distinguished men"), possibly the first words of the Tacitean corpus, recall the opening of Cato the Elder's *Origines* and stake out an ideological position from the start.²⁰ Tacitus' allusion to a representative of the old free state is further emphasized by mention of prominent members of the Stoic circle and their memoirs. This circle had looked to Cato the Younger as its model of opposition to the Caesars. Most renowned as a staunch opponent of Caesar, Cato the Younger recalled the conservatism of his ancestor. Tacitus invites his readers throughout this work—sometimes obliquely, sometimes more directly—to reflect on qualities frequently associated by Roman writers with the ancient republic which both Catos represented: thrift, virtue, chastity and the quest for *gloria*, all were characteristics casting Agricola as an exemplary, if not great figure on the imperial stage. It has long been remarked that Tacitus intends to show his readers how such virtues can abide in public life even in an age generally hostile to them. In the work's final crescendo, Tacitus states the following:

¹⁹ For discussion see Sage (1991) 3385–419.

²⁰ See Ogilvie and Richmond (1967) 126 for discussion.

quippe et uera bona, quae in uirtutibus sita sunt, impleuerat, et consulari ac triumphalibus ornamentis praedito quid aliud adstruere fortuna poterat? opibus nimiis non gaudebat...

(Tac. *Agr.* 44)

Indeed, he [Agricola] fulfilled even the truly good things which are situated in virtues, and what else was fortune able to lay down for one furnished with triumphal and consular honors? In excessive wealth he took no delight...

Martial valor and moderation, achieving the highest office and triumphal honors: what more was there? He was a man who ended his life *beatus incolumi dignitate* ("happy with his dignity unharmed," *Agr.* 44).

What conclusions would an audience, listening to or reading the work for the first time, be tempted to draw? The sitting *princeps* could not boast of as glorious a career as Agricola. Nerva was a Sybarite honored by Nero. A bookish jurist, he won Nero's recognition through his poetic aspirations.²¹ Indeed, when Tacitus, years after the *Agricola*'s composition, finally wrote the Neronian books of the *Annales*, he offered a brief portrayal of Nerva honored in the wake of the Pisonian conspiracy. It paints a stark contrast to Tacitus' beatified father-in-law:

tum quasi gesta bello expositurus [Nero] uocat senatum et triumphale decus Petronio Turpiliano consulari, Cocceio Neruae praetori designato, Tigellino praefecto praetorii tribuit, Tigellinum et Neruam ita extollens ut super triumphalis in foro imagines apud Palatium quoque effigies eorum sisteret.

(Tac. *Ann.* 15.72)

Then as though he [Nero] was about to set forth achievements in a war, he summons the senate and bestows triumphal honors on Petronius Turpilianus who was of consular standing, on Cocceius Nerva the praetor designate, and on Tigellinus, the praetorian prefect.

The extraordinary reward was granted to Nerva, who is set in Tacitus' text between a very close associate of Nero's and his oleaginous prefect—scarcely a position of honor.²² And unlike other future emperors in the *Annales*, such as Galba (*Ann.* 6.20) or Claudius (*Ann.* 3.18), Nerva's future elevation to the purple receives no remark, except to note that his effigy stood in the imperial palace (*Ann.* 15.72) and another was set even above that of *triumphales* (men who had earned triumphal honors) in the Forum. Tacitus lets all of this pass without negative comment, though he has a

²¹ See Syme (1958) 1–2, citing Mart. 8.70, 9.26.

²² See Syme (1958) 1–2 for Nerva's role in crushing the conspiracy.

universally dim view of Neronian ministers—particularly the *literati*, of whom we may want to count Nerva one—who served at Nero’s court or who were among his friends. Seneca, Lucan, Petronius—none escapes Tacitus’ barbs. The contrast between Agricola and Nerva, between the general’s *uirtus* and Nerva’s own record, could not have been greater. At the end of his life as *princeps* Nerva had been humiliated by the praetorian guard which had been amicably disposed towards Domitian, and demanded that Nerva hand over his assassins for punishment. The episode was fresh in mind during the *Agricola*’s composition and few soon forgot it. Some years later Pliny alluded to it in the *Panegyricus*, noting *ruens imperium super imperatorem* (“the empire about to hurl down on top of the *princeps*,” 6.3), and it has long been noted that Tacitus’ portrayal of Galba in the *Historiae* recalls Nerva’s humiliation.²³

The *Agricola*, however, has more serious implications for Nerva and for the *principes* in general. Tacitus’ “Catonian” leitmotif which he sets out in chapter one is picked up in the next chapter by his references to four great opponents of the imperial court, Arulenus Rusticus, Thrasea Paetus, Herennius Senecio and Helvidius Priscus. All suffered exile and or execution and all had their connections, directly or indirectly, with Cato the Elder’s illustrious descendant Cato the Younger. The subject of Rusticus’ biography, Thrasea, had himself written a biography of Cato the Younger (Plut. *Cat. Min.* 25) and imitated him in his life (Tac. *Ann.* 16.22), to his own demise. Senecio had composed a life of Helvidius Priscus, a protege of Thrasea’s who suffered for his connection under Nero and later stubbornly persisted in his opposition until Vespasian executed him.²⁴ Now while there were very likely other more complex reasons for the deaths of these individuals, the “urban myth” perpetuated by Tacitus and very likely accepted by his audience (see, e.g., Plin. *Ep.* 7.19) is what matters. In this regard Tacitus sets his own biography in the context of texts and authors persecuted by the court, thereby constituting a potentially negative comment on the regime or the sitting *princeps*. Indeed, the very mention of such biographies and the placement of Tacitus’ own work in such a context arguably constitutes a stratagem to have the *Agricola* received as just another in a line of such works. Now while it could be argued that Tacitus is writing

²³ Syme (1958) 130, 150.

²⁴ For Helvidius’ biography and his conflict with Vespasian, see Malitz (1985) 231–46; Melmoux (1975) 23–40.

in a more liberated atmosphere than that under Domitian (though that is moot), Tacitus is also aware that he is living in a very unstable political environment, as was his contemporary Pliny (see, e.g., *Ep.* 9.13).²⁵ And at least in the imagination of Tacitus and his audience, there were numerous factors contributing to an instability that made writing dangerous; it was not simply lack of authorial control but the perceived instability of the political situation. While frequently at odds with historical reality, the historical memory of Tacitus is one in which Augustus introduces a treason law and Tiberius and Nero reassert it with greater zeal against the written (and spoken) word. It is a world where Cremutius Cordus writes a history unmolested by the authorities under Augustus only to be persecuted for it under Tiberius. In sum, it is one where poets and tragedians, biographers, orators, and historians are silenced (although other offenses in such cases were almost certainly in play). We here suggest then, that one of the possible effects on Tacitus' audience would have been to set the *Agricola* and its author in the context of imperial opponents. Opposition could potentially have been simultaneously asserted even as the (current) need for it was denied (*Agr.* 3), thereby reflecting the perceived instability of Roman politics in Tacitus' day.

This is not to assert, however, that political instability was not genuine. In Tacitus' own lifetime there had been a vicious civil war after Nero's demise, and there was no doubt concern to avoid its repetition after Domitian's death. There had, too, been *principes* whose relations with the senate (at least as the senators perceived things) had been less than amicable. To understand Tacitus' conceit, however, we must consider his corpus in its expanded form and consider the overall effect. The *Agricola*'s opening shows an interest in free expression. So too did his other minor work, the *Dialogus*, as does the opening of the *Historiae*. The concern occurs again in the opening of the *Annales*, but abides more stubbornly in that work than any other in thematic terms. It comes in for special attention in *Annales* 1.72–4 in an extended digression on the *maiestas* ("treason") law and its initial application under Tiberius. The subject receives special emphasis in the case of Clutorius Priscus for his poem on the (anticipated) death of Tiberius' son Drusus (3.49–51), in a short notice of the persecution of Cassius Severus (4.21), then in

²⁵ Concerning freedom of expression under Domitian see Coleman (1986) 3087–115; for apparent continuity between Domitian and Trajan see Waters, (1969) 385–405.

Crementius Cordus' trial (4.34–5). In reporting Aemilius Scaurus' death (6.28) Tacitus states that one of the reasons for his demise was a tragedy he wrote with allegedly negative and oblique reference to Tiberius. The theme does not appear again in the corpus until 14.48–50, when the *maiestas* law is supposedly reasserted in 62. The purge of literary grandees under Nero follows in 65–6 CE, though not due to literary endeavors but to their involvement with Piso.²⁶ Finally, there was the case of Curtius Montanus, who was penalized for writing *detestanda carmina* (“execrable poems”) against Nero and was considered guilty by association with Thræsea Pactus and his circle (16.28). Add to this the numerous cases in which individuals were allegedly brought to book for verbal abuse of the *princeps* (e.g., *Ann.* 4.42; cf. 6.5), which a reader could easily conflate with those other instances of repression cited. Now despite the fact that all of these cases, without exception, are problematic, for Tacitus (who demonstrably reworked his sources presentation of court cases) none of this matters.²⁷ What matters is the overall impression all of this leaves in his readers' minds, and that impression is that writing is simply dangerous at all times. It is a rhetorical stratagem which valorizes the author, which renders writing an act of *uirtus* in its most literal and concrete “republican” context.

Pliny and Apologia

It may fairly be asked where Pliny, with his letters and *Panegyricus*, fits into the generic context in which Tacitus (and those historians who proceeded him) worked. The *Panegyricus*, in the course of expressing senatorial hopes and expectations for the reign of the new *princeps* Trajan, is laden with ambiguity and subject to dubious interpretation. The work emphasizes the virtues of the current *princeps* and excoriates the vices of his predecessors and arguably constitutes a political document concerning how the senate should be treated and the *princeps* comport himself. There is little need here to present a close analysis of Pliny's only surviving oration, since the work has received recent and close attention by Bartsch, who has shown in an excellent discussion of the work the ambiguities of the praise Pliny bestows on Trajan.²⁸

²⁶ For Seneca: *Ann.* 15.61–4; for Lucan: *Ann.* 15.70; for Petronius: *Ann.* 16.18–20.

²⁷ See Damon (1999) 143–62.

²⁸ Bartsch (1994) 148–87.

Nor do we intend to deal with other historical questions which have already been explored by other scholars. The self-representation of Pliny in the letters and the attempt to revise the historical record of his own participation in Domitian's regime have been well covered.²⁹ So too have the obvious and troubling continuities between the reign of Domitian (even Nero) and that of his supposedly more benevolent successors.³⁰

Pliny's letters have been subjected to less scrutiny for their potential for dissent. The collection constitutes Pliny's own *res gestae* ("memoirs"), which include not only the main political events of Pliny's life, but his views on political comportment, as well as his opinions on the literary and social milieu of his day and the intentional public display of his social and political connections. The collection, although Pliny explicitly states that he did not intend to present it as a history, shows certain affinities with that literary form.³¹ The initial letter of the collection is addressed to Septicius Clarus, a man who must have already been a rising star, since early in Hadrian's reign he became praetorian prefect. Pliny tells his readers that the publication of his collection came at Septicius' urging, and he puts himself in a subordinate position to Clarus when he states, *superest ut nec te consilii nec me paeniteat obsequii* ("it remains that you not regret your advice nor me my compliance," *Ep.* 1.1.2). There is an attempt to establish authority for his work that is similar to ancient historians, though the authority comes not entirely from his own experience but from the request for the work from one with conceivably greater *auctoritas* ("authority"). Moreover, the work clearly shares similarities with the genre as it had come to be written in his day, including such subjects as criminal trials (see, e.g., *Ep.* 2.11) and the deaths of Roman grandees (1.12), an ornate style (2.17), at times even tragic pathos (3.16), and perhaps an implicit *apologia* for participation in Domitian's government (since he was so eager for vengeance; *Ep.* 9.13). More telling, however, is his assertion that he will not maintain a chronological order to his letters (an assertion largely contradicted in terms of dates of composition, though not in terms of events related) because he was not writing a history. In fact, he asserts that the basis for the publication of these particular letters is that they were written

²⁹ For Pliny's rewriting of his own career, see Syme (1958) 76; Giovannini (1987) 233; see also Bartsch (1994) 166–9, who cites both.

³⁰ See Waters (1969) 385–405.

³¹ See Traub (1955) 213–32.

curatius ("rather carefully," *Ep.* 1.1.1). But his profession not to write history arguably sets up, in negative terms, how to read his work, for how else are we—and his contemporary audience—to understand the work except as a personal history?³² Granted, that history may be an unconventional one, despite the following of certain formalities particular to historical writing, with a radically different array of material from what was normally deemed appropriate to the standard norms of the literary form. But that may be precisely the point, and if it is it would not be without its political component.

In considering this let us turn for a moment to Tacitus, who remarks a number of times in his narrative in the *Annales* what is and is not grist for the historian's mill. The first remark comes in the third book (*Ann.* 3.65) where he notes that the particular function of history is not to let virtues be passed over in silence, and to see to it that fear stalks *infamia*. Later Tacitus feels compelled to apologize for the monotony of his subject: *saeua iussa, continuas accusationes, fallaces amicitias, perniciem innocentium et easdem exitus causas coniungimus* ("we string together cruel orders, constant accusations, false friendships, the ruin of innocent people, and the same causes of destruction," *Ann.* 4.33). This is a far cry from the grand battles for empire and the conflicts between *optimates* and *populares*, plebeians and nobles. Again Tacitus later states:

Nerone iterum L. Pisone consulibus pauca memoria digna euenere, nisi cui libeat laudandis fundamentis et trabibus, quis molem amphitheatri apud campum Martis Caesar extruxerat, uolumina implere, cum ex dignitate populi Romani repertum sit res inlustri annalibus, talia diurnis urbis actis mandare.

(Tac. *Ann.* 13.31)

In the second consulship of Nero and that of L. Piso few things happened worth remembering, unless someone enjoys filling up volumes with the praise of foundations and beams, who constructed a massive amphitheater in the Campus Martius, although it has been found in accordance with the dignity of the Roman people to entrust famous matters to annals, such things to the *acta diurna* of the city.

Now Pliny's letters are quite at odds with Tacitus' notions of historical writing, for they arguably straddle both *res inlustri* ("famous matters") and material of the *acta diurna* ("daily doings"), since the letters contain

³² In addition, if we choose to read Pliny as history then he stands out as the only individual to have written a history of his own times with the *princeps* largely absent from the work and sans the *adulatio* we find in a Velleius.

great displays of virtue and infamy while at the same time they also treat mundane matters such as weather, real estate, and what wine to serve to freedmen. But might not the occasionally quotidian nature of the letters itself constitutes a statement about the period in which Pliny lives, and for Pliny might it not have made the best sense to use this literary form to write about it? After all, history in his own day, Pliny implies, has become marginal, a waste of time (*Ep.* 1.13) since it has lost its large audience that it enjoyed two generations before. Indeed, for Pliny the whole affair of writing was an ambiguous activity that rarely escaped alternative (negative) interpretation: *atque ea demum recte facta minus detorqueamus et carpinus, quae in obscuritate et silentio reponuntur* (“but in the end we distort and twist less things rightly done which are set in obscurity and silence,” *Ep.* 1.8). Yet if we decide to read Pliny as history, then we find that there is a seemingly conscious effort to take in hand those topics that Tacitus was latter to lament were inappropriate to history: court cases, building programs, stuff worthy of the *acta diurna*. Indeed, it is perhaps remarkable that throughout Pliny’s letters Trajan’s grand Dacian conquests are almost entirely absent, except in a missive to Caninus Rufus (*Ep.* 8.4), where he praises Rufus’ desire to write an epic about it. The letter, however, while it anticipates Rufus’ great efforts, is qualified by shades of negativism: Pliny says it is an excellent idea. The work will offer a great deal of original material and virtually constitute a *fabula* (“fabled subject matter,” *fabulosa materia*), though true. He will be able to describe the landscape, the bridges and camps, the defeat and capture of the Dacian king with his courageous end, and finally a double triumph. But he continues, there is a serious difficulty—the task may be too great an undertaking, even for Caninus’ talent. A second problem arises: how to fit barbaric names into Greek verse, for which there may be no satisfactory solution.³³ Pliny advises him to use poetic license as did Homer with his language. He then bids him to call the gods to his aid and not to forget “that divine hero” whose exploits he is about to celebrate. His final stipulation is that Caninus proceed slowly and cautiously, and that he allow him to examine and approve the rough drafts piecemeal. Such qualifications can scarcely have been encouraging (and one suspects were not meant

³³ And why, we must ask, is Rufus writing in Greek? Would not Latin reach a wider audience—so why does he aim for what (one assumes) would be a primarily Greek one? Is there some intent to explain or justify Trajan’s actions—and if so, what might the need for such justification imply? Or is it merely for the sake of intellectual exercise?

to be) to Rufus, who may have said the hell with it. Except for one more letter (*Ep.* 10.14), a mere two sentences congratulating Trajan on his conquest, that is all Pliny says about Dacia. Such silence (given Pliny's words in 1.8) can be read a number of ways. Does Pliny intend it as a compliment to the *princeps*? Or is there an implicit criticism in his refusal to glorify Trajan's conquests?

That is difficult to say, though Trajan's appearance in the remaining letters may give us a clue. In the first nine books the emperor appears for certain in less than a dozen out of 257 letters, (there are some where the *princeps* cannot be identified for certain). Among these letters Trajan appears in one as an administrator bestowing triumphal honors (1.7), in several as attending to judicial matters (2.11, 6.22, 7.10, 9.13), in one as granting the *ius trium* (2.13), in another as the addressee of the *Panegyricus* (3.13), and in yet another Pliny shows his appreciation for Trajan's granting him the augurate (4.8). But at certain key points there is indication that Trajan's much vaunted *ciuitas* still came at the arbitrary pleasure of the *princeps*. There is still an undercurrent of the absolute power wielded by the monarch that can never be extirpated from a Roman senator's thoughts. Hence there is an ambiguous reference about the fact that upon Trajan's initial arrival in Rome after coming to power, Silius Italicus refused to come up from Campagna to great him. Pliny's presentation of this incident is ambiguous: *ac ne aduentu quidem noui principis inde commotus est: magna Caesaris laus sub quo hoc liberum fuit, magna illius qui hac libertate ausus est uti* ("indeed, he was not even moved from there by the arrival of the new *princeps*; great is the praise of a Caesar under whom there was this liberty and of that man who dared to use it," *Ep.* 3.7.6–7). So, did Trajan make an announcement excusing senators from this *salutatio* ("greeting") or did he ignore a snub from Silius? And does it matter? The use of the verb *ausus est* ("he dared") gives one the sense that the *princeps*' permission may have given a liberty he did not expect senators to use and also seems to indicate surprise, at least on Pliny's part (and perhaps Trajan's), that anyone would choose to avail himself of such permission.

The sincerity of Trajan's *ciuitas* ("civility") is further brought into question in a letter (3.18) where Pliny discusses the *Panegyricus*, where he tells his readers the purpose of his speech:

primum ut imperatori nostro uirtutes suae ueris laudibus commendarentur, deinde ut futuri principes non quasi a magistro sed tamen sub exemplo praemonerentur qua potissimum uia possent ad eandem gloriam niti. Nam

praecipere qualis esse debeat princeps, pulchrum quidem sed onerosum ac prope superbum est; laudare uero optimum principem ac per hoc posteris uelut e specula lumen quod sequantur ostendere, idem utilitatis habet adrogantiae nihil.

(Plin. *Ep.* 3.18)

First, that the emperor's own virtues might be commended with genuine praises, then that future emperors might be instructed, not as if by a teacher but by example, by which path they might attain to the same glory. For to instruct the *princeps* as to the sort of person he ought to be is indeed a fair thing but burdensome and nearly arrogant; but to praise the best *princeps*, and through this as it were to show a light to posterity which they might follow, has utility but no arrogance.

But is not to commend these virtues to hold them up to view in the hope that the *princeps* will abide by them? Is there not some double game at play here in which praise becomes tantamount to exhortation? Is it merely posterity that he hopes will follow this exhortation, which he notes is something good *pulchrum* ("good") but that verges on *superbum* ("arrogance")? No less problematic is Pliny's remark that the *Panegyricus* was a sort of speech that, with the return of free speech, rendered more certain the author's sincerity: *accedet ergo hoc quoque laudibus principis nostri, quod res antea tam inuisa quam falsa, nunc ut uera ita amabilis facta est* ("and so this also is added to the praises of our *princeps*, that a thing previously as hated as it was false is now rendered sincere and amiable," *Ep.* 3.18.7). Yet as Tacitus noted, *amor* (and presumably its cognates) could be as great a hindrance to objectivity as *odium* (*Hist.* 1.1), and freedom to speak one's mind, which frequently meant denigration of a predecessor, did not mean that historical treatment of a subject was bound to be fair. There is, then, duplicity in Pliny's words.

Pliny's letter to Vettienus Severus, as Bartsch has noted, on how to deliver such a speech picks up this thread of ambiguity, for there Pliny states that, in writing his speech, he desired to avoid anything that looked like flattery based not on a principle of independence but on the knowledge of the *princeps*:³⁴

designatus ego consul omni hac, etsi non adulatione, specie tamen adulationis abstinui, non tamquam liber et constans, sed tamquam intellegens

³⁴ See Bartsch (1994) 172–5 for the ambiguities of praise; see esp. Barsch (1994) 179–80 for a discussion of *Ep.* 6.27 in relation to *adulatio*.

principis nostri, cuius uidebam hanc esse praecipuam laudem, si nihil quasi ex necessitate decernerem

(Plin. *Ep.* 6.27)

As consul designate I abstained not from flattery but, nevertheless, from the appearance of flattery, not on the grounds that I was free and steadfast, but on the grounds that I understood our *princeps*, whose especial praise we consider this, if we should declare nothing as if from necessity.

Once again we are subject to serious difficulties of interpretation. For how does one abstain from the appearance of *adulatio* (“adulation”) but not abstain from *adulatio*? The qualifiers *tamquam*—“not as it were free and steadfast but, as it were, understanding the *princeps*”—destabilizes the meaning and the basis for Pliny’s motives, as does the *si/quasi* (“if”/“as if,” “as it were”) pairing in the final clause. The entire effect here is to dissemble the demands of the occasion necessitated even by a *ciuilis princeps*.

Conclusion

Sometime during his dictatorship Julius Caesar set up Timomachus of Byzantium’s painting “The Suicide of Ajax” in his new temple to Venus Genetrix. It is reasonable to assume, even given our limited knowledge of ancient painting, that it will have followed a particular set of expectations in terms of line, color and treatment of subject (as any painting would) to satisfy its audience. But is it reasonable to expect that the painting will have conveyed the same meaning for a viewer after Caesar’s African campaign, in the wake of Cato the Younger’s suicide, as it had before? That is seriously open to doubt. The case is similar for Pliny and Tacitus, both of whom worked in and followed (or, in the case of Pliny, arguably experimented with) particular demands of literary forms already well in place. Yet at the same time both were conscious that the dynamic historical and political circumstances under which they lived raised the possibility of finding commentary on the present (negative or otherwise) within their works independent of authorial intent. The very “stabilizing” characteristics of their texts in a sense cast into relief the fluidity of Roman politics. If we were *delatores* (“informants,” “unscrupulous prosecutors”), we could surely find a case against both in their texts for subversion; it was their good fortune that neither Nerva or Trajan appear likely ever to have permitted such a charge.

CHAPTER TWENTY

READING POLITICS IN SUETONIUS

David Konstan

Accounts of omens and portents make up a significant part of Suetonius' *Lives*, as do astrological predictions (though they have received negligible consideration in the work of modern scholars)...¹

In the course of the emperor Titus' brief reign, there occurred a threat to his throne. Titus had assumed the office of *pontifex maximus*, and he took the priesthood so seriously that he vowed to keep his hands clean of any defilement—indeed, Suetonius affirms that he accepted the role precisely to keep himself pure. From this moment on, he remained innocent of any person's death, even in intention, declaring that he would rather die than kill another. And yet, he did not lack provocation. For two men of patrician rank were found guilty of aspiring to the imperial throne (in keeping with his spare style in the later *Vitae* of *De Vita Caesarum*, Suetonius does not name them). In this pass, he did nothing more than admonish them to desist, thereby teaching the lesson, Suetonius tells us, that *principatum fato dari* ("imperial power is granted by fate," *Tit.* 9.1; cf. *Aur. Vict. Caes.* 10.3). If, however, they desired anything besides that, he promised that he would confer it upon them.

Titus' magnanimity did not stop here. He immediately dispatched messengers to the mother of one of them, who was outside the city at the time, in order to relieve her anxiety by announcing that her son was safe, and went so far as to invite the two men to an intimate dinner and even, on the subsequent day, had them sit beside him at a gladiatorial contest. Moreover, when the fighters, as was the custom, presented Titus with their swords to confirm that they were sharp, he passed them to his companions so that they might examine them—a little like those scenes in western movies in which the hero submits to being shaved by his arch enemy, unmindful of the razor at his throat. Finally, it was said, according to Suetonius, that Titus informed himself of the horoscopes of the two men, and confirmed that they were

¹ Edwards (2000) xviii.

indeed in danger, but at some future time and not at his hands. And so it proved to be (*Tit.* 9.1–2).

How should one read this episode? Clearly, it is intended as great praise of Titus.² Many of the elements in it, nevertheless, are conventional. In the tracks of Julius Caesar, it was regular for emperors to assume the office of *pontifex maximus* (Augustus established the precedent in 12 BCE), though this did not necessarily mean that they took their duties in the pious spirit that Titus did. Julius was also the model of imperial clemency; indeed, in 44 BCE the senate elected to erect a temple in honor of *clementia Caesaris* (Plut. *Caes.* 57.4; App. *BCiv.* 106; Cass. Dio 44.6.4).³ Augustus, in turn, adopted it as a prime virtue of his own: it was inscribed as one of the four cardinal imperial virtues on the *clupeus uirtutum* (“shield of virtues”) that the senate awarded to Augustus in the year 27 (*Res Gestae* 34).⁴ That no one was slain during Titus’ reign is exceptional, and no doubt due in part to its brevity; at all events, Dio Cassius (66.19.1) also records that Titus put no member of the senate to death, nor was anyone else killed during his rule, and the story is endorsed by Ausonius (*De XII Caesaribus* 9) and by Orosius (7.9.13), who affirm that no citizen blood was shed under Titus’ administration.⁵ Titus’ dramatic gesture of confidence in the two would-be assassins whom he has pardoned is paralleled, curiously enough, in stories concerning both Nerva and Trajan. According to Cassius Dio (68.3.2), Nerva seated Crassus and others who had conspired against him by his side during a spectacle, and gave them swords to test for sharpness, though they were unaware that their plot had been detected: such was his lack of fear of sudden death. Dio further reports (68.15.4–6) that Trajan, unaccompanied by a bodyguard, visited the home of Licinius Sura after he had been denounced for conspiring against him, and even entrusted himself to Sura’s doctor and barber. The following day Trajan is reported to have said: εἰ ἤθελέ με Σούρας ἀποκτεῖναι, χθὲς ἂν ἀπεκτόνει (“if Sura had wished to kill me, he would have done so yesterday,” 68.15.6).

Nevertheless, there are several elements that are unique to Suetonius’ account, and it is these that lend the passage its specific character. For

² It is not simply an encomium, however; cf. Steidle (1951) 106–7.

³ Cf. Palombi (1993) 279–80.

⁴ Cf. Fears (1981) 885–90.

⁵ See Mooney (1930) 498; Martinet (1981) 99. According to Cassius Dio (68.2), Nerva too refrained from killing any senator, despite plots against him.

one thing, only Suetonius makes Titus' assumption of the office of *pontifex maximus* the reason why he abstained from shedding the blood of Roman citizens, asserting that he became priest just because he desired to be unsoiled. It was only after this, according to Suetonius, that Titus' blameless record commenced (*nec auctor posthac cuiusquam necis nec conscius*, "he was neither the author of nor party to any murder after this," *Tit.* 9.1)—Suetonius does not specify that no killings occurred previously. What is more, no other emperor is recorded by Suetonius or anyone else as having pronounced so didactic a message to his would-be murderers as Titus' brief apophthegm concerning the fatedness of the principate. Finally, Titus' behavior in announcing the horoscope, or *genitura*, of the two men—that is, the day and hour of their birth—in order to relieve their anxiety that he might do them harm, at the same time communicating to them that danger indeed threatened, but from elsewhere, is to my knowledge entirely unparalleled in the sources, whether in relation to Titus or to any other Roman ruler.

How did Titus acquire this information about the two pretenders to his throne? It might have been part of the dossier that was assembled when the two men were accused of conspiring against the emperor; alternatively, Titus might have made enquiries of his own, perhaps through trusted astrologers in his court, for example Ptolemy Seleucus or Balbillus.⁶ I presume that it was in part precisely because of his knowledge of the charts of the two conspirators that Titus had the confidence to spare them, if not in respect to the penalty of death—for he was already resolved not to take the life of any citizen—then with respect to exile or the confiscation of their property. This will also, I imagine, have been the grounds for his declaration that rule of the empire is bestowed by fate: the point being that, as Titus knew, fate had not reserved rulership for these two in particular. Of course, Titus may also have had an inkling of his future from readings of his own horoscope, which might have indicated, for example, that he would die of natural causes. But given that there is no mention of such a consultation in the passage, it is perhaps better to suppose that Suetonius has artfully reserved for the end of the episode the information on the basis of which Titus had so breezily and confidently declared his view on the destiny of the empire. The phrasing of the final clause perhaps confirms this hypothesis: *dicitur etiam cognita utriusque genitura ambobus periculum*

⁶ Cf. Cramer (1954) 141.

adfirmasse, verum quandoque et ab alio, where the ablative absolute *cognita genitura* could be rendered, “given that he knew their horoscopes—he went so far [*etiam*] as to indicate that there was a danger to both, but at some future time and from another quarter.”⁷

Suetonius has thus constructed a tight little narrative that highlights in particular the piety or religiosity of Titus, rather than his mildness, mercy, or courage in the face of danger, all of which of course play a part in the characterization of him. While I do not presume to divine Suetonius’ intentions, this is at least what I expect a culturally literate reader of his own time would perceive in his text. And yet, even so, the story is far from completely transparent in its significance. To begin with, the religious sentiment associated with the office of *pontifex maximus* is not necessarily of a piece with that involved in the emperor’s high regard for astrology. The pontificate was among the most ancient priesthoods in Rome, with its origins in the early republic or more likely in the epoch of the kings. Even assuming, for a moment, that astrology may be seen as pertaining to Roman religion rather than, say, science,⁸ it only arrived in the eastern Greco-Roman world at the beginning of the third century BCE, and it was two centuries more before it achieved an appreciable presence in Rome itself.⁹ The college of pontiffs, over which the *pontifex maximus* presided, by contrast, was responsible for setting the religious calendar of Rome, among other duties—those days that were *fas* or *nefas*, appropriate for transactions or the reverse. It had no particular connection with divination.

Divination was rather the province of the augurs, who read omens in the flight of birds, and of haruspices, masters of the Etruscan discipline of interpreting the livers of sacrificed animals. But here too there was a major difference between traditional divinatory practices and those associated with astrology. In the republic, as Liebeschuetz observes, “[d]ivination was intimately linked with the taking of decisions. Normally it did little more than provide routine confirmation. But from time to time its use resulted in postponement, prevention, or reversal of a decision.”¹⁰ Such taking of omens has nothing to do

⁷ Contrast the Loeb translation (Rolfe [1997] 319): “It is even said that inquiring into the horoscope of each of them, he declared...”

⁸ Barton (1994b) generally links astrology with physiognomy and medicine as a regime of knowledge.

⁹ Cf. Barton (1994b) 33: “It is striking that astrology in any form was marginal to Roman elite politics until the Late Republic.”

¹⁰ Liebeschuetz (1979) 13.

with fatalism; rather, it provides information on which to base strategic choices: whether it is safe to act or one must rather change plans in order to avert the unfavorable conjunction. Similarly, the taking of auspices and other forms of divination looked to determine the mood of the gods, and if possible to reconcile them in the event that they were, or seemed, hostile. To quote Liebeschuetz once again, the “traditional religious explanation of public disaster was that divine anger had been provoked by incorrect or neglectful ritual. The corresponding remedy was to establish what ritual fault had been committed and to put it right.”¹¹ These traditional practices largely lapsed, however, during the period of the civil war. Liebeschuetz speculates that among the reasons why are that “men were beginning to look at portents as indications of what would happen, rather than as warnings of what might happen unless the gods were adequately appeased. Moreover the procedure for dealing with portents was intimately linked with the republican system of government and the management by the senate of sovereign popular assemblies.”¹² So too, Barton affirms that astrology “emerged as the Roman Republican system began to collapse.”¹³

With the coming of the empire, on the contrary, signs and portents now “serve to indicate not the mood of the gods, which can be turned aside, but the inevitable course of the future.”¹⁴ What is more, instead of helping to guide decisions of state concerning such issues as war and peace and other matters of public interest, signs are now beginning to be read chiefly in connection with the destiny of the emperor: “All Suetonius’ lists of signs revolve round two issues, and two only: the rise to imperial power and the fall from it.”¹⁵ By weaving together in a single story Titus’ pious observance of his status as chief pontiff, which requires that he abstain from civil bloodshed, and his confidence in signs and more particularly in astrology, by which he determines that two conspiratorial aspirants to his throne in fact pose no threat and can be invited to a private dinner without fear of harm, Suetonius simultaneously testifies to a revived reverence for the office of an ancient priesthood and to the new regard for the art of astrology which saw in the stars sure indications of the future course of events. Titus is

¹¹ Liebeschuetz (1979) 56.

¹² Liebeschuetz (1979) 58.

¹³ Barton (1994a) 38.

¹⁴ Wallace-Hadrill (1983) 191.

¹⁵ Wallace-Hadrill (1983) 191.

both a supremely devout servant of the traditional Roman gods and a modern fatalist.

Astrology was but one means of determining the course of fate; Suetonius records a whole variety of predictors, including “signs, portents, omens, auspices, dreams, pointers, predictions.”¹⁶ Gugel, who emphasizes the role of portents in demarcating the structure of Suetonius’ *De Vita Caesarum*, notes the varied vocabulary that he employs in this connection: *prodigia, omina, ostenta, signa, portenta, auspicia, somnia, mirabilia, monstra, praesagia*.¹⁷ Now, in many ways, the belief in predestination served the interests of empire. While signs may presage the rise and fall of individual emperors, they consistently announce that a new emperor will take the place of the one who has fallen. In this sense, one might say that the empire transcends the emperor: “L’Empire est voulu par les dieux, qui envoient des signes multiples pour annoncer le destin de chacun des Césars.”¹⁸ Wallace-Hadrill, indeed, sees a still deeper import in the new style of divination under the empire:

While the benefit of autocracy was to lend stability, unity and order to the potentially volatile Roman world, its weakness lay in the uncertain transmission of power from one reign to the next... Yet if the unpredictable and irrational was the product of a higher divine rationality and the inscrutable ordinances of fate, order in the highest sense might remain intact. Suetonius’ care to demonstrate that the rise and fall of both individual rulers and of dynasties was predictable from empirically observed phenomena may be seen as an attempt to penetrate scientifically a higher, divine world-order.¹⁹

In this, we may see too a connection with the increasing diffusion of Stoicism as the prevailing philosophical world view under the empire, with its faith in predestination and its scientific rationalization and legitimization of the possibility of inferring the course of human events from the positions of the stars. The imperial world order on earth can be understood as a manifestation, indeed, of the unity of the cosmos under a single deity, Zeus, whom the Stoics identified with the *πνεῦμα* (“spirit”) that underlay all things in the universe. Titus, in the episode

¹⁶ Wallace-Hadrill (1983) 192.

¹⁷ Gugel (1977) 27; Mouchovà (1968) 34–42 argues that prodigies occur at critical turns in the narrative. On Suetonius’ use of signs as a focussing device, in contrast to Plutarch, see Moreno (1997) 325.

¹⁸ Gascou (1984) 777; cf. 779: “Ainsi les dieux, s’exprimant à travers des signes multiples, ont fait savoir leur volonté de maintenir l’Empire.”

¹⁹ Wallace-Hadrill (1983) 202.

we are considering, may then be seen as giving expression to this grand and comforting view of imperial destiny, which is taken to be guided by powers above and beyond the merely human capabilities of even so godly a figure as the emperor himself.

Stoicism, however, was also the belief system that gave rise to conspiracies against the emperor, and this side of Stoicism too was not unrelated to its engagement with astrology, and indeed with the art of the *haruspices* as well.²⁰ For if, as Liebeschuetz affirms, “[i]n the reign of Augustus, belief in astrology was widespread,”²¹ it is equally the case that a “second development of the principate was that astrology came to be linked with conspiracy.”²² There was already one expulsion of astrologers from Rome as early as 33 BCE; as Liebeschuetz observes:

In AD 11 Augustus made it illegal to consult a diviner about the date of the death of any person.... That such consultation might in fact encourage a man who was in any case eager to attempt a *coup d'état* is shown in Tacitus' account of how Otho overthrew the emperor Galba.²³

If astrology provided knowledge of future events and hence encouragement to the emperor, it provided no less a service to the emperor's opponents, who might also perceive themselves as bound to succeed and indeed as forming part of a divine plan. Access to astrological information—this particular form of knowledge as power—was impossible fully to control.²⁴ As Barton puts it, “Augustus was taking a risk in using astrology to legitimate his position, because he was opening up a way for others to follow.”²⁵ And indeed, astrology was first linked to a treason charge as early as 16 CE, in the case of Marcus Scribonius Libo Drusus (Tac. *Ann.* 2.32).²⁶

The episode in Suetonius that we have been examining itself points to this potentially oppositional aspect of astrology and the reading of signs in general. Titus has determined, by whatever means, that the two rebels against his authority are not destined to replace him, but are themselves in fact at peril, albeit at the hands of someone other than

²⁰ On the rivalry between astrologers and *haruspices* see Ramelli (2003) 49–83; Barton (1994b) 38–9.

²¹ Liebeschuetz (1979) 122.

²² Liebeschuetz (1979) 123.

²³ Liebeschuetz (1979) 124.

²⁴ Liebeschuetz (1979) 125–6.

²⁵ Barton (1994a) 42.

²⁶ Barton (1994a) 43–4.

himself. What induced Titus to argue in this fashion? Of course, we have no independent testimony by which to explore the story in greater depth, assuming that it represents a true account to begin with. But the historical accuracy of Titus' pronouncement is not our concern so much as the way that Suetonius' account would have been interpreted by readers who were literate, as it were, in Roman culture of the time. They might have inferred, even from Suetonius' brief, almost passing remark about the horoscopes of his would-be assassins, that they too had consulted the stars, and perhaps had received a report more favorable to their enterprise than that which Titus disclosed. Why should they not have imagined that rulership was in fact granted by fate, as Titus claimed, but to themselves, this time, as opposed to the fated continuation of Titus' reign? This would not be the first time that usurpers had made such a claim, as we have noted, nor indeed the first time that it had proved true. The opening of Suetonius' account of Galba's life mentions a series of prodigies predicting precisely the end of Nero's reign (*Galba* 1) and his replacement as emperor by Galba (*Galba* 4),²⁷ and there are numerous other instances in Suetonius (including the accession of Titus himself: *Tit.* 2). Whether or not belief in destiny served to guarantee a sense of the continuity of the empire as such, it did not give support to belief in the duration of any single reign. Astrology and related arts were, from this point of view, as much a factor for instability as for stability in the empire.

We do not know, as I have said, that the conspirators had favorable signs of their own to rely on. But it is not implausible to see in Titus' confident assertion of the role of fate in conferring the principate, and in his deliberate investigation of the charts of the pretenders to his throne, a self-conscious way of contesting any such authority that they may have laid claim to and of overriding it, as it were, with his own more powerful reading. Titus' version is supported by the disclosure of their plot and by his own absolute power, from this point on, over their fates—reinforced by Suetonius' editorial comment that things turned out as Titus predicted. Nevertheless, in the very act of affirming his own security by way of the planets, and thus claiming the authority of astrology for the throne, Titus simultaneously acknowledges, if only implicitly, the subversive possibilities of such acts. I suggest that readers of the time would have recognized the nature of the game,

²⁷ Cf. Mooney (1930) 190, 200–1; Venini (1977) 13–4, 21–3.

and been aware that two could play it as well as one—or rather, that it was not and could not be a game of solitaire, to be played by the emperor alone.

We have teased a great deal out of the brief narrative that occurs toward the end of Suetonius' *Vita Divi Titi* by filling in some of the cultural knowledge that a Roman reader in Suetonius' world might be presumed to bring to bear on the text. I suspect that, far from being overly subtle, the reading I have outlined is in fact rather thin in comparison with what Suetonius' sophisticated public would have found in this passage—not by means of self-conscious interpretive strategies such as allegory and other procedures for decoding hidden meanings in works of literature, but simply by virtue of recognizing the larger context and social significance of the events recounted. What, for example, ought one to make of Titus' exceptional regard for the sanctity of his office as *pontifex maximus*, as Suetonius tells it? Conceivably, this would have been taken as a sign of reverence for the institutions of the republic, and hence on a par with his decision to keep his hands clean of blood—senatorial blood, one understands. If so, then the mention of the office, and not just of its consequences for Titus' behavior, sets the reader up in advance for the gesture of confidence and mercy he is about to make in behalf of two men of the patrician class who have fallen under suspicion of disloyalty: Titus has proclaimed, as it were, that he is one of them, the pious holder of an office originally reserved precisely for patricians. The magnanimous gesture of dispatching couriers to inform the anxious mother of one of the conspirators that her son was safe manifests, one supposes, Titus' own *pietas*, which outstrips that of the two rebels: it is Titus, a reader might conclude, and not his opponents, who stands for family values.

If Suetonius has not always invited the kind of close reading that I have given of his text, the reason is in part a certain flatness or matter-of-factness in his style and in the structure of the *De Vita Caesarum*: Suetonius avoids rhetorical flourishes, even if he will occasionally “startle and stay the observer with a single clarity of detail.”²⁸ Some scholars refer to his apparent objectivity in this connection. Thus, Mooney writes that the impression left by Suetonius' biographies is “that the

²⁸ Lounsbury (1987) 99.

author desires neither to blacken nor to whitewash the characters of the Caesars.”²⁹ So too della Corte remarks of Suetonius:

Esercita la libera critica su tutti, anche su quelli che la opinione pubblica dell'età traianea salvava; per contro salva altri, che la medesima mentalità condanna in blocco, per i loro lati positivi. Per operare con siffatta obiettività tiene un tono di prosa che non si eleva dalla mediocrità dignitosa e vigilata.... Evita del pari lo stile moralizzante e i giudizi....³⁰

This is an impartiality that distinguishes him from Tacitus and Plutarch alike. For Suetonius, “[i]l moralismo è un atteggiamento a lui ignoto.”³¹

Gascon, however, has sought to penetrate behind the veil of this ostensible “objectivité de Suétone”:

Parce que l'on considère Suétone comme incapable de mettre en forme les matériaux divers dont il a fait usage.... on lui a reconnu un souci de vérité qui serait l'envers de ses faiblesses en tant qu'écrivain: à défaut de profondeur, il aurait de la naïveté, à défaut d'art, il aurait de la bonne foi.³²

But Gascon does not rest content with this description. Citing among other works that of Steidle³³ in proof of Suetonius' sophistication as an artist, he concludes, “[i]l y a sans doute lieu de se demander si, derrière ses déclarations d'équilibre et son affectation de sincérité, il n'existe pas une partialité de notre auteur.”³⁴ More particularly, it is as judge of morals that Suetonius is seen to take sides in his evaluation of the Caesars: Suetonius “n'est pas neutre ni indifférent: il fait preuve de sévérité morale dans ses jugements sur les Césars,”³⁵ though Gascon parts

²⁹ Mooney (1930) 26.

³⁰ Della Corte (1967) 198.

³¹ Cf. Edwards (2000) xxvi: “Suetonius' writing offers no philosophical or moral generalization”; Shotter (1993) 12: “Suetonius remained external to his subjects, making no general estimate of character.”

³² Gascon (1984) xiv.

³³ Cf. Steidle (1951) 9–12.

³⁴ Gascon (1984) xiv; cf. Gascon (1984) 676, where, following Steidle (1951 [cf., e.g., 107, 125]) and Cizek (1977 [cf., e.g., 155]), he remarks, “[n]ous voudrions de notre côté essayer de montrer comment Suétone a pu donner l'illusion qu'il faisait preuve d'objectivité... et la façon dont en réalité il prend constamment parti et contredit cette illusoire objectivité.”

³⁵ Gascon (1984) 711.

company with those who see in Suetonius either an implicit criticism of Hadrian or an attempt to set himself up as a wise counselor.³⁶

Of course, Suetonius has standards by which to judge the difference between good actions and bad. It is his particular contribution to the genre of biography to have broken decisively with the chronological ordering of events characteristic not only of history proper but also of life stories by dividing up his account into topics or *species*, and two of these rubrics are precisely the good deeds and bad of the several emperors. As Suetonius explains:

Proposita uitae eius uelut summa partes singillatim neque per tempora sed per species exequar, quo distinctius demonstrari cognoscique possint.

(Suet. *Aug.* 9)

After a brief outline of [Augustus'] life, I shall treat it in separate sections; I shall not use a chronological framework, but subject-headings in order to make the work more comprehensible to my readers.³⁷

Shotter points to two disadvantages of this technique, the first being the loss of a "historical perspective," the second that it permits "no real development of character."³⁸ In fact, it allows little room for an analysis of character at all. As Wallace-Hadrill notes, despite the huge range of imperial virtues that might be celebrated, Suetonius' list is "reducible to four recurrent areas: clemency, civility, liberality and the restraint of luxury and lust."³⁹ In turn, "[V]ices were what antagonised the emperor's subjects."⁴⁰ The worst of emperors had their kinder moments, just as the best could give way to arrogance or cruelty: witness the early life of Titus himself, who is in many ways Suetonius' ideal prince but who, prior to assuming the purple, had a reputation for violence and licentiousness (*Tit.* 6–7), to the extent that people feared he would prove another Nero—though Nero, we may note, followed the opposite trajectory, from being a disciplined youth to dissoluteness as ruler. Suetonius provides no explanation for this change in Titus, save to affirm that he was *natura beneuolentissimus* ("by nature most generous,"

³⁶ Gascou (1984) 771–3; cf. Carney (1968) 7–24; Cizek (1977) 181–92; also Momigliano (1971) 100 on character portraits as a mirror for princes.

³⁷ The translation is that of Shotter (1993) 9.

³⁸ Shotter (1993) 9.

³⁹ Wallace-Hadrill (1983) 152. For Plutarch's emphasis on the virtues of prudence and courage, see Frazier (1996) 177–230.

⁴⁰ Wallace-Hadrill (1983) 157.

8). This is just as well, since generous or not, Titus was fated to occupy the throne (though not to retain it for long), just as Nero was.⁴¹

Plutarch was more conscious of providing exemplary models of ἦθος (“character”) in his *Vitae Parallelae*, although since character is revealed in actions, the boundary between biography and history may be blurred. For him, concentration on the small detail that might illuminate personality, as opposed to grand public events, was the very essence of the former as opposed to the latter. Plutarch offers a programmatic statement of this distinction at the beginning of his account of the life of Alexander the Great:

οὔτε γὰρ ἱστορίας γράφομεν, ἀλλὰ βίους, οὔτε ταῖς ἐπιφανεστάταις πράξεσι πάντως ἔνεστι δῆλωσις ἀρετῆς ἢ κακίας, ἀλλὰ πρᾶγμα βραχὺ πολλάκις καὶ ῥῆμα καὶ παιδιὰ τις ἔμφασιν ἦθους ἐποίησε μᾶλλον ἢ μάχαι μυριόνεκροι καὶ παρατάξεις αἱ μέγιστα καὶ πολιορκίαι πόλεων.

(Plut. *Alex.* 1)

For I am writing biographies, not histories; and even in the most brilliant deeds there is not always an indication of virtues or vices; but a slight thing, like a remark or a joke, often reveals more of a man's character than battles in which thousands die, or great battle arrays, or sieges of cities.⁴²

So too in his *Galba*, Plutarch observes:

τὰ μὲν οὖν καθ' ἕκαστα τῶν γενομένων ἀπαγγέλλειν ἀκριβῶς τῆς πραγματικῆς ἱστορίας ἐστίν, ὅσα δ' ἄξια λόγου τοῖς τῶν Καيسάρων ἔργοις καὶ πάθει συμπεπτώκεν, οὐδὲ ἐμοὶ προσήκει παρελθεῖν.

(Plut. *Galba* 2.3)

To relate each individual event exactly is the job of factual [πραγματικῆς] history, but it is not appropriate for me to pass over all the things worthy of mention that bear on what the Caesars did and suffered.

⁴¹ Bradley (1978) 15 thinks that Nero, according to Suetonius' account, is neither corrupt from birth, nor is there a gradual revelation of character; rather, “Suetonius understood Nero's character to be fundamentally evil, but this did not prevent the emperor from undertaking praiseworthy actions at various points throughout his life. There is then, a certain authentic flexibility. However, the evil predominates” and there is not a “slow evolution of personality in the literary treatment.” Cf. Edwards (2000) xvi: “it is highly significant that Suetonius almost never seems to be concerned with *why* emperors were the way they were.” So too Russell (1995) 85 says of Plutarch: “The given or inherited part of personality (*phusis*)... is never clearly said to change,” although sometimes, as in the case of Sulla, a surface transformation may occur (Russell (1995) 83–4); cf. Wardman (1974) 132–409.

⁴² Duff (1999) 15 (cf. 17, 20) rightly warns, however, against taking this notice as valid for all the *Vitae*; cf. Frazier (1996) 35, 62 *et passim*, who argues that Plutarch highlights the moral character of his subjects at the expense of historical causality.

"Why this interest in character?" Pelling asks;⁴³ he replies, "Plutarch's answer is again clear: he hopes that his readers might be led by examples of virtue to become better themselves,"⁴⁴ and likewise be deterred from evil by the instances of wickedness, just as he himself has been by his studies (cf. Plut. *Aem.* 1.1). Whether or not Plutarch always follows through on these introductory declarations of moral purpose in the biographies as a whole, it is evident that he conceives his project in such terms.⁴⁵

According to Wallace-Hadrill, Suetonius pushed the idea of the independence of biography in respect to history still further: "Rather than let biography become history, he would write non-history."⁴⁶ Part of his strategy was the division of his narrative into subsections or *species*, as mentioned above. As Edwards writes, "Plutarch's mode of organization is essentially chronological in contrast to Suetonius' thematic approach."⁴⁷ But in so doing, Suetonius also transformed, as we have noted, the genre of biography itself, which normally traced the life and career of a subject from childhood through maturity, noting principally the significant actions that the subject performed. A subject who had no impact on the course of history would hardly merit a biography; as Robert Hughes once said of an autobiography he found particularly uneventful: "The un-lived life is not worth examining."⁴⁸ Suetonius would appear no more to be writing biography in the ordinary sense than history, and one can almost see why one excellent critic of Suetonius was moved to declare that he "never makes up his mind about the true nature of his subject."⁴⁹

⁴³ Pelling (1995) 143 *a propos* Plut. *Nicias* 1.

⁴⁴ Pelling (1995) 143, citing *inter alia* Plut. *Per.* 1–2.

⁴⁵ Russell (1995) 82 notes that "[b]y the time a man is grown up, his pattern of conduct is normally well enough established for predictions to be made about how he will behave in most circumstances. . . . Plutarch's normal procedure in writing a Life is to state his conclusions on this point fairly early . . . and then justify them by the ensuing narrative."

⁴⁶ Wallace-Hadrill (1983) 9.

⁴⁷ Edwards (2000) xiv; *contra* Shotter (1993) 8, who sees in Suetonius' *Vitae* "an effort to portray a subject's life in such a way as to illustrate both character and times. Care is taken to achieve chronological accuracy, and evidence is weighed."

⁴⁸ Robert Hughes (1991) 300.

⁴⁹ Townend (1967) 83. *De Vita Caesarum* is in this respect quite different, it seems to me, from Suetonius' biographical vignettes in *De Viris Illustribus*, which conform more to the Alexandrian model of a prefatory blurb; as Wallace-Hadrill (1983) 70 observes, "there are vast areas of the *Caesars* for which the *Illustrious Men* can offer no precedent"; *contra* Shotter (1993) 8.

It may be that we are mistaken in looking either for history or character in Suetonius. Let us return to the episode which served as the point of departure for this study. Suetonius does not treat the sparing of the two conspirators as a major event in the public life of the empire. Titus is revealed as clement, but that does not seem to be the main point of the story. He is also pious, and his belief in the fatedness of imperial power is central to the story, but Suetonius does not seek to praise Titus for his religiosity or for his interest in astrology.⁵⁰ The story seems rather to be an illustration of how the emperor and members of the aristocracy interact.⁵¹ Divination is important because it is one of the major strategies in the game: it is a valid science in the hands of true experts, though it is also open to fraud and bluffing, as are all branches of learning. It is a grave mistake, however, to dismiss it or other techniques of prognostication as superstition.⁵² On the contrary, we could almost say that Titus is a successful emperor just because he has an exemplary mastery of this discourse. If we read Suetonius dialectically, putting ourselves in the place of the elite public for which he wrote, we may see this incident, and others, as an occasion for testing our own competence in such a pass, evaluating the cleverness of the moves of the protagonist emperor as well as his would-be opponents. A recent critic has concluded that Plutarch's *Vitae Parallelae* "invite the reader to challenge and to ponder".⁵³ Such an active engagement with the text is all the more required in the case of Suetonius.

⁵⁰ Della Corte (1967) 55–76 argues that emperors are characterized as good or bad on the basis of whether or not they heed prodigies.

⁵¹ Della Corte (1967) esp. 9–28, 165–90 sought to identify a specifically equestrian "mentality" in Suetonius' *Vitae*, and his view was developed further by Cizek (1977) 167–73; but the implied reader of Suetonius' text seems to be anyone knowledgeably interested in the dynamics of the imperial court.

⁵² E.g., Mooney (1930): 19: "One of the most striking features of the biographies is the importance attached by Suetonius to dreams and omens of every kind. He was by nature superstitious," citing in evidence Suetonius' plea for Pliny's help in postponing a trial date because of an ominous dream he had (Plin. *Ep.* 1.18). Baldwin (1983) 527 sees signs as mere filler, because he has nothing important to say about Galba's reign: "The biographer falls back, doubtless with no particular grief, on a time-honoured device: omens. The entire preamble is but a rag-bag of portents and interpretations"; cf. Shotter (1993) 5. Gugel (1977) 24 avers that portents are as inseparable from history as from epic: "So ist es nur allzu verständlich, wenn Sueton den Vorzeichen im Rahmen seiner Kaiserbiographien einen grossen Raum gewidmet hat." But see Wallace-Hadrill (1983) 193: "Suetonius himself clearly took prognostication seriously. But, more important, his evidence shows how seriously it was taken by others at every social level."

⁵³ Duff (1999) 309; on Plutarch's conception of the engaged reader, cf. Konstan 2004.

The story of Titus' forbearance toward the would-be usurpers is followed up by his equal or greater magnanimity toward his brother Domitian, who continually plotted against him (*Tit.* 9.3). Here again, Titus neither put him to death nor banished him, but held him in high honor and insisted, as he had done from the beginning, that he was his colleague and successor to the throne—just as he himself had served as partner and protector of his father Vespasian during his reign (*Tit.* 6.1); he also begged him tearfully to reciprocate his feelings for him. In this, Titus went beyond his consideration of the patrician conspirators, to whom he was prepared to grant anything but the title to rule. Domitian did not have long to wait, since just then (*inter hæc*) Titus died (10.1), an event also predicted by omens: the escape of an animal that Titus was sacrificing and thunder in a clear sky, and indeed he took sick immediately afterwards (Domitian himself was to be exceptionally paranoid about portents and prophecies concerning his death: Suet. *Dom.* 14–5). Just prior to these signs, Titus wept abundantly in public at the end of a gladiatorial show (doubtless held in the new colosseum). Suetonius, in his elliptical way, does not explain why, but the reader may infer that he had some inkling that his life was about to end. This would explain his earlier remark that Domitian was not only his associate in empire but his successor as well, and also, perhaps, his passionate desire to be reconciled with his brother. Did Titus, then, know something more about his impending death than the fact that it would not be at the hands of the two conspirators he spared? Did Domitian? The savvy reader might detect indications in Titus' tears of the crafty manipulation of divinatory knowledge as the brothers jockeyed for power in the palace.

Suetonius' brief *Vita Divi Titi* is a subtle piece of work; its very brevity, in contrast with the great biographies of Julius and Augustus and the relatively more lengthy *Vitae* of the next four Caesars in the Julio-Claudian line, helps, I think, to highlight the kinds of connections we have been eliciting. In this respect, the last six *Vitae*, with their thin documentation and omission of proper names, may have a rationale of their own, and are not a sign of a falling off in Suetonius' technique.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Various explanations have been offered for the different nature of the last six biographies and the absence of quotations from documentary sources, among them loss of interest in the project on Suetonius' part or hurried publication (e.g., Wallace-Hadrill [1983] 61–2), or even that they were the earliest to be composed (Bowersock [1969] 119–25; *contra* Bradley [1973], repeated in Bowersock [1978] 19; taken seriously though

However this may be, the episode of the conspiracy against Titus is artfully constructed to intimate to the discerning and engaged reader the form in which politics continued to be played out in the imperial court through the control—often unstated but always implicit—of information and the techniques of interpretation.⁵⁵ The discourse of portents was an essential element in these always sensitive negotiations.

not endorsed by Baldwin [1983] 49); the most common, however, is Suetonius' loss of access to archival materials after he was dismissed from his office as *ab epistulis* ("imperial secretary"): e.g., Shotter (1993) 10. It is not clear, however, to what extent Suetonius depended on such information (cf. Hurley [2001] 8). Baldwin (1983) 180–1 is skeptical of any explanation and holds that Suetonius' method did not change from the earlier to the later *Vitae*. I suggest there is a difference, and that the later *Vitae* are suited to Suetonius' conception of their subjects. We may note that the three very brief reigns of 68 and 69 CE are followed by a new dynasty, which looks back to that of the Claudians, both of which, as Suetonius himself points out, lasted exactly twenty-five years (*Vesp.* 25, again suggested in a prophetic dream).

⁵⁵ Although I have not discussed it here, the passage immediately preceding the episode of the usurpers (*Tit.* 8.3) describes how Titus suppressed with the harshest punishments the *delatores* ("informers") who had long plagued civil life. This too can be seen as a move in the game of managing sources of information. The reader may be moved to wonder who it was—if not informers—who exposed the plot of the conspirators.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

JUVENAL: ZEALOUS VINDICATOR OF ROMAN LIBERTY

Martin M. Winkler

In 1692 John Dryden published, under the following year's date, *The Satyrs of Decimus Junius Juvenalis and of Aulus Persius Flaccus. Translated into English Verse by Mr. Dryden, and Several Other Eminent Hands. To Which is Prefix'd a Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satyr*. Dryden was one of the pre-eminent figures of seventeenth-century English letters and, according to Samuel Johnson, "the father of English criticism." He was also the greatest verse satirist in the history of English literature until then. His *Discourse on Satire* is a detailed overview of Roman satire and contains influential characterizations of the satiric poets. Dryden makes the following observations about Juvenal, contrasting him with Horace:

And besides this, the Sauce of *Juvenal* is more poignant, to create in us an Appetite of Reading him. The Meat of *Horace* is more nourishing; but the Cookery of *Juvenal* more exquisite; so that, granting *Horace* to be the more general Philosopher; we cannot deny, that *Juvenal* was the greater Poet, I mean in Satire. His Thoughts are sharper, his Indignation against Vice is more vehement; his Spirit has more of the Commonwealth Genius; he treats Tyranny, and all the Vices attending it, as they deserve, with the utmost rigour: And consequently, a Noble Soul is better pleas'd with a Zealous Vindicator of *Roman Liberty*; than with a Temporizing Poet, a well Manner'd Court Slave, and a Man who is often afraid of Laughing in the right place: Who is ever decent, because he is naturally servile. After all, *Horace* had the disadvantage of the Times in which he liv'd; they were better for the Man, but worse for the Satirist. 'Tis generally said, that those Enormous Vices, which were practis'd under the Reign of *Domitian*, were unknown in the Time of *Augustus Caesar*. That therefore *Juvenal* had a larger Field, than *Horace*. Little Follies were out of doors, when Oppression was to be scourg'd instead of Avarice: It was no longer time to turn into Ridicule, the false Opinions of Philosophers; when the *Roman Liberty* was to be asserted. There was more need of a *Brutus* in *Domitian's* Days, to redeem or mend, than of a *Horace*, if he had then been Living, to Laugh at a Fly-Catcher. This Reflection at the same time excuses *Horace*, but exalts *Juvenal*...

Juvenal was as proper for his Times, as they [sc. Horace and Persius] for theirs. His was an Age that deserv'd a more severe Chastisement. Vices were more gross and open, more flagitious, more encourag'd by the

Example of a Tyrant; and more protected by his Authority. Therefore, wheresoever *Juvenal* mentions *Nero*, he means *Domitian*, whom he dares not attack in his own Person, but Scourges him by Proxy.¹

Although Dryden has much more to say about Juvenal, Rome's most important satirist, the words quoted here give us what amounts to the standard view of Juvenal before and after Dryden.² This is especially true for Dryden's exaltation of Juvenal as champion of freedom in the Roman empire. The following pages attempt a new vindication of Dryden's assessment of Juvenal (if not of Horace). First, however, it is necessary briefly to outline the facts and inferences concerning Juvenal's life.

Juvenal's Life

We know very little about the life of Juvenal (c. 60–140 AD), who says very little about himself. Short ancient biographies consist largely of fabrication deriving from the satires.³ Evidence in the poems indicates that Juvenal wrote and published his sixteen satires, divided into five books, approximately between 110 and 130. Aquinum, a wealthy country town about eighty miles southeast of Rome, is generally agreed to have been his birthplace. According to an early biography he was the son or adopted son of a well-to-do freedman; that is, a former slave. Juvenal received rhetorical training, as his poems abundantly prove and as a reference to such training (1.15–7) states directly. He is said to have practiced rhetoric until his middle age.

Ancient commentators on the satires from the second half of the fourth century observe that Juvenal criticized the age of emperor Domitian (81–96) because actors were more influential at court than men of virtue (7.90–2). Domitian then exiled him to Egypt, the end of

¹ The text is from Kinsley (1958) 650–1, 654 (lines 1954–77, 2084–9).

² Rudd (1963) 155–63 shows the errors and inconsistencies in Dryden's contrast of Horace and Juvenal, especially in regard to his negative verdict of Horace as Augustan court poet. Weinbrot (1982) xiii–xv is a modern example of the continuing influence of Dryden's views of the two Roman poets.

³ Hightet (1954) 2–41 presents an elaborate reconstruction of Juvenal's life extracted from the poems. I have argued against this approach in Winkler (1983) 1–22. On Juvenal's low-class or possibly foreign origin see Syme (1958) 774–6. I here use, in abbreviated form, material from some of my earlier work on Juvenal, especially from Winkler (1995) 59–81 and Winkler (2001); these have more detailed argumentation and additional references.

the Roman world and the setting of *Satire* 15, in retaliation for these lines and for an earlier reference (4.37–8) to Domitian's baldness, to the Romans an indication of debauchery and, in Juvenal's context, also of tyrannical cruelty.⁴ The oldest extant biography of Juvenal maintains that the lines in *Satire* 7 against the actor and court favorite Paris were not published until much later, when Juvenal dared give readings of his satires and, seeing their success, published them, incorporating his earlier composition against Paris. According to this biography, Juvenal's banishment did not occur until he was an old man. The *Vita Iuvenalis* says that he died shortly after his arrival from "distress and disgust" (*angore et taedio*). Both versions of the story, however, are fanciful, and the entire tale of Juvenal's exile lacks evidence or verisimilitude.

The story of his exile, however, has made Juvenal the second major Roman poet to be banished by an emperor after Augustus had inflicted a similar fate on Ovid. To a large part, Juvenal's reputation and popularity have rested on his readers' conviction that a man of absolute power was attempting to silence a writer. A satirist who tirelessly attacks vice and folly and runs afoul of a powerful monarch who was then and is still today considered a despot can turn into an inspiring symbol of the perils inherent in the exercise of free speech in an unfree society. So Juvenal became, in Dryden's phrase, "a Zealous Vindicator of *Roman* Liberty."⁵

Juvenal and the Imperial System

In *Satire* 1 Juvenal announces that he will vigorously attack vice and folly. Aberrations from social norms and ethical standards are his chief targets. But *Satire* 1 also makes clear that Juvenal was aware of the limitations that an independent-minded author had to face. He presents himself as a kind of documenter who records *quidquid agunt homines* ("whatever men do," 1.85); as befits a satirist, however, his focus is on everything that is bad. A critic easily runs afoul of those in power if they feel offended; hence the later story of Juvenal's exile under Domitian. As a precaution, therefore, Juvenal resorts to using names from the past as cover for his indictments of the living: *experiar quid concedatur in illos/quorum Flaminia tegitur cinis atque Latina* ("I'll try out what is permitted against

⁴ *Satire* 4, discussed below, presents Domitian as a quintessential tyrant.

⁵ Cf. Rudd (1985) 70–81 on the subject of freedom and authority in Juvenal.

those whose ashes are covered on the Flaminian and Latin Ways," 1.170–1). Such a strategy is, of course, not Juvenal's invention. We may compare Ovid's parallel procedure in his *Metamorphoses* of dealing with contemporary events under mythical guise.⁶

During the Roman republic Lucilius had made criticism and moral and political exposés characteristic features of satire. He could engage in such criticism not least because he had a high-ranking patron. Later, when Rome was in the process of becoming an imperial monarchy, Horace in his satires turned directly only on people of lower rank. But the political changes in Rome from republic to empire made it dangerous or impossible for satirists to attack those in power. Under Nero, Persius refrains from such attack altogether. In his study of the imperial historian Tacitus, Juvenal's older contemporary, Syme summarizes the situation which Juvenal had to face:

The living were immune. Junius Juvenalis proclaims that his attacks will be confined to those whose ashes are entombed beside the Latin or the Flaminian Way. Of necessity. The poems confirm. Juvenal cannot visit scorn and derision on the men who have wealth and place and power. He anxiously avoids the new aristocracy now dominant. . . . Nor can he touch the themes of imperial policy. Literature or fiction furnish most of his requirements, with an especial debt to the reigns of Nero and Domitian. . . . No senatorial patrons are honoured in his poems, or even any of the high equestrian dignitaries and heads of departments.⁷

But the examples from the past point to the shortcomings of the present. Like all other satiric poets, not only the Roman ones, Juvenal criticizes the folly and vice of his own day even when he turns to the dead.

This precautionary strategy, whose necessity Juvenal explains and defends in *Satire* 1, is eloquent testimony to the fact that what Greeks called *parrhesia*, what Horace in his satires called *libertas* and found exemplified in the satires of Lucilius (*Sat.* 1.4.5–8, 1.10.1–17; cf. Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.65), and what we today call freedom of speech was not to be found in the Roman empire.⁸ Tacitus expressed this fact in a memorable

⁶ This is discussed by Schmitzer (1990) 298–320, esp. 307–14 within the broader context of the *Metamorphoses* as political poetry.

⁷ Syme (1958) 499–500.

⁸ Interested readers might turn to the following standard works, all with references to additional primary and secondary sources: Wirszubski (1950); MacMullen (1966); Klein (1969)—a collection of essays on various aspects of this subject and on a number of important authors, among them Seneca, Lucan, and Tacitus—and Ahl (1984a) 174–208; Ahl (1984b) 40–111.

phrase. Until the death of Domitian, he observed, *principatus* ("empire") and *libertas* had been *res... dissociabiles* ("things irreconcilable," *Agr.* 3.1). Just before he made this point, Tacitus had given examples of writers who were put to death and whose books were burned (*Agr.* 2). In a later work Tacitus wistfully exclaimed: *rara temporum felicitate ubi sentire quae velis et quae sentias dicere licet*, "rare are the happy times during which one can think what one wishes and say what one thinks," *Hist.* 1.1.4).⁹ Under Augustus, Ovid had been banished for the rest of his life to *orbis ultimus* ("the end of the world," *Tr.* 1.1.127–8) for reasons which scholars still debate but which Ovid clearly links to his writing: *carmen et error* ("my poem and my mistake," *Tr.* 2.207). Under the same emperor Horace had written satires, rather innocuously entitled *Sermones* (*Conversations*), which were far different from Juvenal's. So Horace's reputation as a satirist, although not as a lyric poet, suffered considerably in the post-classical reception history of Roman literature. After Augustus writers had to walk an even finer line to avoid incurring the displeasure of the man in absolute power. Under Tiberius, as his biographer Suetonius reports, a poet was put to death and a historian driven to suicide for statements the emperor considered inappropriate. Their writings were destroyed, although authors and works had been safe under Augustus (Suet. *Tib.* 61.3). The historian in question was Aulus Cremutius Cordus, whose fate Tacitus reports in detail (Tac. *Ann.* 4.34–5; cf. Cass. Dio 57.24.2–5) and whose *libertas* Quintilian, an older contemporary of Juvenal, still mentions (*Inst.* 10.1.104). Before Quintilian, the philosopher Seneca had also praised Cordus and his *libertas* in a consolation addressed to Cordus' daughter (*Dial.* 6.1.2–4, 22.4). Elsewhere Seneca, himself banished under Claudius, speaks of *periculosi sales* ("the danger inherent in ridicule," *Helv.* 19.6). This is a revealing comment on literature written under the emperors, applicable to all critical writing but in particular to satire. The development continues and intensifies under Nero, when no fewer than three of Rome's greatest authors—Lucan, Petronius, and Seneca himself—were forced into suicide.

So imperial writers had to proceed with caution, trying to strike a safe but still meaningful balance between the opposing constraints of political power and literary art. In Juvenal's case, *Satire* 1 alerted readers to the dangers of writing in this genre. Again, a comparison

⁹ On Tacitus and *libertas* see especially Klingner (1958) 194–206, a fundamental study still worth reading.

with Juvenal's contemporaries is instructive. At the beginning of his *Histories* Tacitus observes that, until the moment in which all power was transferred to one man as the result of the Battle of Actium in 31 BC, which had made Octavian, the later emperor Augustus, sole ruler, writers had been able to proceed *pari eloquentia ac libertate* ("with eloquence and freedom in equal measure," 1.1.1). Clearly Juvenal cannot and does not write with a freedom of expression that is equal to his rhetorical elegance. To make up for the lack of the former, he turns to the past as a cover for the present. Much of the complexity of Juvenalian satire derives from this and other strategies which allow him to approach his topics or targets indirectly. Juvenal leaves it to his readers to deduce the points to be drawn from his satires for their own time. Even Quintilian, a man in a position far more integrated into the social and political structures (and strictures) that obtained at Rome than would ever be possible for a satirist like Juvenal, seems to have been aware of the often perilous nature of speaking and writing or at least of the necessity of paying lip service to the power structure. Hence his obsequious *elogium* of Domitian at the beginning of book 4 of his *Institutio Oratoria*, a passage so fulminating in its exaggerated praise as to be meaningless (4 *praef.* 2–5; cf. 3.7.9, 10.1.91–2).¹⁰ Modern scholarship has stressed Quintilian's awareness of the importance of silence, a noteworthy aspect of his work, which proved to be one of the most influential treatises on rhetoric that has come down to us from antiquity.¹¹

The main theme of Juvenal's satires, especially in book 1, is the dissolution of the social fabric, illustrated by neglect of the patron-client relationship—one of the most important features in the rigorous vertical hierarchy of Roman society—and by the perversion of the concept of friendship. Vice and folly are his focus not chiefly as manifestations of personal shortcomings but as powerful threats to society as a whole. Scholars have analyzed the thematic unity between and among these poems. They deal with violations of some of the most important ties on which Roman society depended.¹² In *Satires* 2–5 Juvenal puts his

¹⁰ See Seel (1977) 184–5, 226–7.

¹¹ On this: Seel (1977) 326–53, esp. 332–4; cf. 351. The title of Seel's book translates as "Quintilian or The Art of Speech and Silence." On Juvenal and Quintilian see Anderson (1961) 1–91.

¹² Cf. Anderson (1957) 33–90 and LaFleur (1979) 158–77 on Juvenal's first book of satires. *Amicitia* ("friendship") and *amicus* ("friend") are terms regularly applied to social and political contexts.

views of the satiric genre explained in *Satire 1* into practice. Attentive readers will be expected to remember what they had read there and to apply it now. *Satire 2* indicts hypocrisy by means of an attack on Roman men who engage in perverse and excessive practices of homosexuality. In *Satire 3*, one of his most famous and complex works, Juvenal has Umbricius, in some ways if not entirely a stand-in for himself, deliver a tirade which condemns Rome in a vivid portrayal with realistic but at the same time exaggerated and distorted details. From this condemnation of Rome *tout court* Juvenal turns to his biggest target in *Satire 4*, the emperor himself and his court. This emperor is Domitian, long dead by the time of the satire's composition but meant as a stand-in for the current ruler—indeed, for all such rulers. *Satire 4* has become one of Juvenal's most famous works, referred to prominently by Dryden in his *Discourse*.

Satire 4: A Fishy Story

Juvenal addresses the nature of imperial power by characterizing the world of Domitian and his circle. The satire's story, in which a lowly fisherman brings his emperor a huge turbot as a gift, exposes Domitian and the imperial power structure to ridicule. Even the fisherman's world far away from Rome reveals something about the imperial system. Juvenal explicitly tells us the reason why the fisherman decides to embark on his long and arduous trip to court: The whole Adriatic coast is full of imperial spies and denouncers (4.47–8) and of what he wittily calls *algae inquisitores* ("seaweed inspectors," 48–9). Juvenal hints at the closed system of power which has replaced the free republic of old. This theme of freedom lost reappears when the turbot is called a *fugitiuus piscis* ("runaway fish," 50) and an *elapsus* ("escapee") who *ueterem ad dominum debere reueri* ("must return to his old master," 52). These terms describe not an animal but a human, a runaway slave. The climax in this brief characterization of the fisherman's environment comes next. If we believe Palfurius and Armillatus, stand-ins for all imperial lawyers and denouncers, then anything *conspicuum* ("notable") and *pulchrum* ("beautiful") in the sea—that is to say, anything valuable—*res fisci est, ubicumque natat* ("belongs to the emperor; wherever it swims," 53–5). But this is not true because according to Roman law fishing in the sea was open to anybody. The power of the *inquisitores*, who would pronounce the turbot a runaway and confiscate it, is therefore illegal; it results

from the unlimited and unchallengeable domination of Domitian, their master. The conclusion which follows summarizes this aspect succinctly: *donabitur ergo, / ne pereat* ("it shall be a gift, then, to prevent its [or 'his'] perishing," 55–6), a conclusion reached from the fisherman's perspective. But this sentence is ambiguous. Primarily it means that the fish should not be lost to the fisherman, that is, through confiscation. The meaning "to spoil" or "to rot" is to be understood in *perire* as well. Since this sentence provides neither verb with a grammatical subject, not only the fish but also the fisherman may function as a possible subject of *pereat*. In the latter sense, the turbot has to be given to the emperor in order that its captor may remain safe. To possess something as *conspicuum* as this giant fish is dangerous, and to take one's chances by keeping it for oneself is foolish, given the presence of the *inquisitores*, who are *dispersi* ("spread out everywhere," 48). Any confiscation by them is likely to be accompanied by reprisals, and the fisherman would not be the first to perish for an absurd reason.¹³ So he finds himself in the precarious situation of having to face the henchmen and enforcers of imperial power. This reveals Juvenal's attitude to the political system under which he himself lived even after the death of Domitian, when supposedly better times had begun.¹⁴ A *delator* contemporary with Juvenal appeared, quite prominently, at *Satire* 1.33–6: just one indication that besides appearances not all that much had changed.

Juvenal then conducts his fisherman into the presence of the emperor. Absurdly, a dead fish, accompanied by its low-ranking bearer, is ceremoniously entering the inner sanctum of power while the ostensibly mighty are reduced to the status of impotent spectators and are locked out (4.62–4). In the world ruled by Domitian, the senate has become powerless and negligible. When the fisherman addresses his emperor in a brief speech about the fish he has caught, the words Juvenal gives him culminate in one of the most famous instances of imperial flattery in Roman literature: *ipse capi uoluit* ("he wanted to be caught himself," 69)—as if the turbot had informed his captor about his wish to be eaten only by the master of the world. This is an obvious impossibility and

¹³ Suet. *Dom.* 10 lists people whom Domitian had executed for trivial causes; cf. Juv. 1.47–8.

¹⁴ On this see Waters (1970) 72: "Juvenal has the merit of being almost alone among the writers of the period [after Domitian] in not joining in the chorus of flattery." Cf. also Wiesen (1973) 464–83 on *Satire* 7.

an equally obvious lie on the fisherman's part. But his three final words make a political and moral point. Any man in limitless power likes to be flattered although he usually thinks himself to be above flattery. But through flattery even a tyrant may fall victim to those inferior to him. Flattery makes him vulnerable if the flatterer pursues a manipulative strategy, as flatterers invariably do.

The case of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* is an illuminating parallel. Moments before he is assassinated, Caesar considers himself superior to manipulation:

These couchings and these lowly courtesies
Might fire the blood of ordinary men
Be not fond,
To think that Caesar bears such rebel blood
That will be thaw'd from the true quality
With that which melteth fools—I mean sweet words,
Low-crooked curtsies, and base spaniel fawning.
(Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar* 3.1.36–43)¹⁵

This passage comes after the scene in which Decius Brutus, one of the conspirators, persuaded Caesar to go against his original intention and to attend the senate meeting at which he is to die. Earlier still, spectators and readers of the play had been instructed in the technique of flattery, when Decius explained the tactic he intends to use on Caesar:

I can o'ersway him; for he loves to hear
That unicorns may be betray'd with trees,
And bears with glasses, elephants with holes,
Lions with toils, and men with flatterers;
But when I tell him he hates flatterers,
He says he does; being then most flattered.
(Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar* 2.1.203–8)¹⁶

In Domitian's case, we know from the historian Cassius Dio that a desire to be flattered was Domitian's most conspicuous characteristic; Dio goes so far as to call it Domitian's worst feature (Cass. Dio 67.4.2).¹⁷

¹⁵ Dorsch (1955) 64–5. "Rebel blood" is "unreliable disposition."

¹⁶ Dorsch (1955) 44.

¹⁷ The comments on the fisherman's address to Domitian by Luisi (1998) 124–6 barely attempt to fathom the text's complexity, just as his focus on Domitian as high priest (*pontifex maximus*; cf. 4.46) and on the trial of the Vestal Virgin Cornelia does not do justice to *Satire* 4 as a whole.

So Juvenal aptly comments on Domitian's predictable reaction to the fisherman's combination of an unusual gift and blatant flattery:

quid apertius? et tamen illi
surgebant cristae. nihil est quod credere de se
non possit cum laudatur dis aequa potestas.
(Juv. 4.69–71)

What could be more open? But nevertheless his coxcomb rose. There is nothing which power equal to the gods cannot believe about itself when it is being praised.

A speaker who wields no power at all has effectively manipulated the most powerful man on earth, who is clueless about what is happening to him. So the lowly fisherman has the last word and the last laugh on his mighty emperor. His brief speech is full of double meanings, which no translation can successfully convey. Here I give only the surface meaning of the fisherman's words:

tum Picens "accipe" dixit
"priuatis maiora focus. genialis agatur
iste dies. propera stomachum laxare sagina
et tua seruatum consume in saecula rhombum.
ipse capi uoluit."
(Juv. 4.65–9)

Then the man from Picenum said, "Take this, 'cause it's too large for a private person's hearth. Let this be celebrated as a lucky day. Hurry, treat your belly to this nourishing food and eat up the turbot destined for your era. He wanted to be caught himself."

Several of the fisherman's terms contain criticism of the imperial system. The word *sagina* may serve as an example. In general, it means "food used for fattening or nourishment." When describing fish, it specifically refers to the small fry on which big fish feed (Varro *Rust.* 3.17.7; Plin. *HN* 9.14). But big fish are regularly caught by means of small fish used as bait. Thus *sagina* carries the double meaning of "small fry" and "bait." Here it is verbal bait, a rhetorical hook that describes the fisherman's manipulative strategy. Daringly, he comes close to admitting that he is in the process of hooking Domitian. There is, however, yet another layer of meaning in *sagina*. Its literal sense ("food for fattening") leads to the figurative sense of the verb *saginari*, "to gorge oneself." This verb can take on strong connotations of moral condemnation.¹⁸ The critical overtones in Juvenal's word choice are clear.

¹⁸ Cicero employs it in his speech for Sestius as climax to his description of mutual bloodshed among citizens and in this way illustrates the general breakdown of morals

Direct flattery of the emperor set in with the fisherman's assertion that this miraculous fish had been destined for none other than Domitian's table. The fisherman presents himself as a tool of providence, which had marked the turbot for Domitian presumably as a token of divine favor. The hyperbole signals to us the obvious nature of the speaker's false adulation—obvious, that is, to all but its addressee. The immediately following climax of the fisherman's short speech presents a fitting because outrageous conclusion to his flattery. As Juvenal will remark later in this satire, it used to be easy to manipulate a ruler in the simple days of yore (4.103). He implies that modern times demand subtlety and sophistication, not least in the domain of rhetoric and wit used for manipulation and subtle criticism of a tyrant who is unpredictable and therefore extremely dangerous.

Domitian's name is an appropriately descriptive term for a man in absolute power. The emperor who wanted to be called, and consequently *was* called, *dominus et deus* ("lord and god") bears a name etymologically related to the first of these two titles. His very name characterizes him as a tyrant, one who has "subdued" (*domare, domitum*) everybody to his rule. Juvenal cannot have been unaware of the meaning of Domitian's name and of its connections to the theme of *Satire* 4. Domitian is called *dominus* (twice: 4.52, 96) and *tyrannus* (86); his rule is characterized as *tempora saevitiae* ("times of cruelty," 151). At line 84 Domitian is called *clades et pestis* ("a ruinous plague"), and the satire's last words show us a graphic picture of the tyrant dripping with the blood of slaughter (*caede madenti*, 154). Early in this poem, Juvenal identified Domitian as the last of the Flavian emperors (*Flavius... ultimus*, 37–8), but he never names him. This silence itself draws attention to the tyrant's name and its meaning. The system of domination—*dominatio*; that is, empire—which Juvenal describes makes the actual naming of the *dominus* Domitian superfluous: a telling instance of Juvenalian indirection.

In the following part of *Satire* 4 Juvenal describes the assembled councilors and their deliberations about the turbot (72–118). The imperial councilors point to the consequences of aristocratic power perverted into tyranny and of its concomitant vices: injustice and bloodlust, fear and cravenness. At the outset Juvenal draws attention to the paradoxical nature of the mutual disaffection between Domitian and his advisors. He points out Domitian's disdain of his *proceres* ("ministers," 72) in

and of social and legal stability in the republic (*Sest.* 78). The imperial writer Curtius Rufus uses the verb to characterize the decline into vice and debauchery of Alexander's army in Babylon (Curt. 5.1.39).

the short—and for its brevity all the sharper—statement *quos oderat ille* (“whom he hated,” 73); conversely, his councilors are pale with fear of a “friend” against whose power they have no recourse: *in quorum facie miserae magnaeque sedebat/pallor amicitiae* (“in whose faces resided the pallor of a wretched friendship with a man in exalted position,” 74–5). His dangerous powers are duly mentioned later: *domini gladii* (“the master’s swords,” 96). The expression *pallor amicitiae* illustrates the perversion of moral values which marks a tyrant’s rule. The first councilor mentioned, Pegasus, is not so much the prefect of the city of Rome (*praefectus urbi*, the official title) as merely a *uilicus urbi* (“city steward,” 77). This is a revealing word choice because a *uilicus*, an overseer of a farm or a country estate, was usually a freedman or a slave. Pegasus stands in relation to Domitian as a slave does to his master. Moreover, Pegasus’ legal expertise (79) at a time “when justice is disarmed” (*inermi iustitia*, 80–1) indicates that he is the wrong man in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The second imperial advisor, aged Crispus, is a good man, but he finds himself condemned to silence despite his eloquence, which is on a level with his moral character (4.82). His *mile ingenium* (“gentle nature,” 82–3) contrasts with Domitian’s *saeuitia* (“savagery,” 85). Crispus has learned that no *honestum... consilium* (“honest advice,” 85–6) can prevail at a time when telling the truth even about a subject as trivial as the weather can endanger one’s life (87–8). Silence is Crispus’ only defense. The absence of free speech leads to the absence of all speech. Crispus represents the old republican ideal of *uir bonus dicendi peritus* (“the good man experienced in speaking”), an ideal here turned into its opposite, for by necessity Crispus is a good man experienced in silence. Consequently Juvenal does not assign him any speech. Crispus’ silence illustrates the situation of all those facing oppression by the powerful. As a well-known Roman saying has it, “silence screams” (*cum tacent, clamant*, Cic. *Cat.* 1.21.6).

Juvenal’s portraits of the other councilors also serve to condemn Domitian. Their deliberations about what to do with the enormous fish end in bathos. It is to be cooked whole rather than to be cut up (4.130–6). Juvenal stresses the turbot’s size in terms which carry a variety of meanings. The fish is *monstrum* (“a monster,” 45) and *belua* (“a beast,” 127). In *Satire* 4 *monstrum* also describes humans (2, 115), so the word possesses obvious moral connotations. Its association with Domitian is made as explicit as Juvenalian indirection allows. Veiento,

one of the councilors, draws the emperor's attention to the appearance of the turbot, whose dorsal fins are standing up (*erectas in terga sudes*, 128). These words parallel Juvenal's description of Domitian's reaction to the fisherman's flattery: *illi / surgebant cristae* ("his coxcomb rose," 69–70). But in any literal sense *cristae* can refer only to animals. Juvenal's wording is meant to reveal Domitian's animal nature. Juvenal is not alone in the use of such imagery for this ruler.¹⁹

We may detect additional layers of satire in connection with Domitian and his fish. As we have seen, the emperor rises to the fisherman's bait despite his rhetorical acuity. The blatant contrast of his proven rhetorical sophistication to the foolishness he is here made to exhibit reveals a telling comment on Domitian's intelligence and, in general, on the effect which great power may have on the mental capabilities of those who wield it. Flattery neutralizes their smartness. Domitian behaves just as the fisherman says the turbot behaved: He wants to be hooked. This naturally turns him into a fool. In his foolishness Domitian even resembles his fish, for the ancients thought that the *rhombus* possessed very little intelligence.²⁰ In a work by an anti-imperial satirist a *rhombus* is thus the perfect choice for a gift to an emperor. Possibly Juvenal took a cue from Martial, who in *Epigrammata* 13.91 exhorts his addressee to send a sturgeon to the imperial palace. The elder Pliny reports that this fish was held in no esteem whatever (*HN* 9.60).

A more covert association between Domitian and the turbot is size. Juvenal takes pains to impress on the reader the animal's enormousness: *spatium admirabile* ("the stupendous space," 4.39) and *spatiosus orbis* ("the spacious globe," 132). Comparable to this is Juvenal's hint at an oversized Domitian. Juvenal does not state explicitly that Domitian is noticeably large or even fat, but he charges him with gluttony. A mullet which the odious courtier Crispinus had bought for himself and eaten all alone (15–27) had earlier provoked the indignant question: *quales... epulas ipsum glutisse.../induperatorem?* ("what kind of banquets did the emperor himself devour?", 28–9). The attribution of gluttony to Domitian and the obesity that this implies is Juvenal's own invention,

¹⁹ Plin. *Pan.* 48.3–5 had similarly called Domitian *immanissima belua* ("a most fearful beast") lurking in its cave. The emperor Julian referred to Domitian as φοινικόν θηρίον ("a murderous beast") in his *Caesares* (311b), a kind of satire written in 362 AD.

²⁰ Keller (1913) 2.367. The ancient authority for this is the comic poet Plato (Schol. Ar. *Nub.* 109).

a satiric distortion for which the historical record shows no conclusive evidence.²¹

The first phrase describing Domitian in *Satire* 4 is *caluus Nero* ("bald Nero," 4.38). Reinforced by juxtaposition to the name of a quintessentially bloodthirsty emperor, baldness reveals Domitian's debauched character.²² Juvenal twice uses animal imagery to expose Domitian's savagery: in the introductory clause *cum iam semianimum laceraret... orbem* ("when he was tearing at a world already half-dead," 37) and in the previously mentioned phrase *caede madenti* ("dripping with slaughter"), on which the satire ends.²³ During the empire, *orbis Romanus* ("the Roman world") has become *laceratus orbis* ("the torn-up world"), to borrow a phrase from Petronius (*Sat.* 121.121). Juvenal's *iam* ("already") reveals that this process had started long before Domitian.

But the tyrant who preys on the world eventually ends as prey himself. Domitian will lose his life through assassination when he falls victim to a conspiracy. From *lacerare orbem*—tearing up the world—during his rule Domitian proceeds to the stage of *lacerari*, being torn apart, in the literal sense of the word. As Suetonius tells us, Domitian suffered eight dagger stabs at the hands of his attackers (*Dom.* 17.2). The one and only word of direct speech that Juvenal assigns to Domitian in *Satire* 4—his question what to do with the giant fish (*conciditur?*, "do we cut it up?", 130)—foreshadows his own fate. Part of *laceratus orbis* turns against its *lacerator* and administers the appropriate punishment. The manner of Domitian's death is analogous to the eventual fate of his fish. The historian Procopius reports that Domitian's body was cut to pieces and that a statue was modeled on his dismembered corpse (*Anecdota* 8.13–20). Similarly the turbot, although decreed to be cooked

²¹ Suet. *Dom.* 18.1 tells us that Domitian in later life developed a paunch. Cf. Plin. *Pan.* 49.6–7. Keller (1913) 2.367 understands Juvenal's expression *pontifex summus* (4.46, for Domitian as chief Roman priest) to mean "arch gourmand," doubtless because of the priests' banquets (*pontificum cenae*). Heilmann (1967) 363 concludes that gluttony appears as a special character trait of Domitian's rule. Cf. Sweet (1979) 302 n. 18. Furthermore, *sagina* can mean "corpulence" (L&S s.v. II; OLD s.v. 3) and means "gluttony" at Tac. *Hist.* 2.71.1; cf. Plaut. *Mostell.* 236.

²² Cf. Bramble (1974) 111 n. 3 on *calvus* at Pers. 1.56. See also Deroux (1990) 282–4.

²³ I discuss these lines and Juvenal's portrayal of Domitian as a "bête humaine" in detail in Winkler (1991) 28–33. The animal imagery in *lacerare* ("to tear"), which I examine there, becomes explicit in the substitution of *accipitrare* (from *accipiter*, "hawk") for *lacerare* as reported at Gell. *NA* 19.7.11. I take this opportunity to correct an editorial error in Winkler (1995) 242, 244 where all parenthetical translations were added without my knowledge. That of *lacerare* as "to flay" is wrong in the context of animal imagery, as I demonstrated earlier in Winkler (1991) 30–2.

in one piece, will eventually have been carved for dinner. So Domitian's unusual gift itself points to his doom. Again, Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* provides a verbal and factual analogy. Brutus famously exhorts his fellow conspirators about the manner in which they should kill Caesar: "Let's carve him as a dish fit for the gods."²⁴

The complexity of Juvenal's portrayal of Domitian and his circle is expressed in the various meanings of the words *rhombus* and *orbis* and by the associations they carry.²⁵ If, as we have seen, Domitian's name is significant for the theme of *Satire* 4, the name of his fish, *rhombus*, is so, too. When pronounced—and ancient literature was usually read out aloud—*rhombus* is an anagram of *morbus*, the Latin word for "sickness" and "disease," and suggests that Domitian and his rule and, by implication, the imperial power system as a whole are a disease which has overtaken the world. The turbot, round in appearance, is a symbol of the world, which the Romans called *orbis* ("circle," "globe"), a term Juvenal so uses at lines 37 and 148 of this satire.²⁶ In *Satire* 4 *orbis* primarily denotes the world. But as the elder Pliny informs us, *orbis* is also the name of a fish (*HN* 32.14). Thompson, the modern authority on ancient fish, actually identifies it with the *rhombus*.²⁷ So does Juvenal, for *spatium admirabile rhombi* ("the stupendous space of the *rhombus*," 4.39) is identical with *spatiosus orbis* ("the spacious globe," 132). Domitian's fish is a metaphor for his world, both sarcastically—it is being reduced to a triviality when a fish receives an imperial audience—and seriously: the phrase *semianimus orbis*, the diseased and half-dead world clawed by a tyrant, expresses Juvenal's moral perspective on imperial power. By way of anagram, the word *rhombus* points to the general moral disease of the times just as the fate of the turbot parallels the decay of the *orbis*. As we have seen, Juvenal even associates Domitian with the *rhombus* through the idea of corporal rotundity, which he attributes to him. Eventually the world, the fish, and the emperor share the same fate. All end up *lacerati* ("cut up").

²⁴ Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar* 2.1.173 (Dorsch [1955] 43).

²⁵ Cf. Anderson (1957) 78–80, reprinted in Anderson (1982) 242–4; Sweet (1979) 248–9; Gowers (1993) 207–11.

²⁶ *Orbis* is short for the standard Roman phrase *orbis terrarum*, "the circle of the countries" as seen from an elevation, for example, by gods.

²⁷ Thompson (1947) 223 *s.v.* RHOMBOS: "also Lat. *orbis*, *orbella*." Both *orbis* and *rhombus* are named for their circular appearances.

Dinner with Domitian

The imperial world whose portrait Juvenal draws with unforgettable vividness in *Satire* 4 becomes even stranger if we reflect on what is missing from the story of Domitian's fish. After we hear about all the pomp and circumstance involved in the preparatory stage—deliberations how the turbot is to be cooked and served—there is no mention of what should have come next: the imperial banquet at which Domitian, perhaps alone or, more likely, in a circle of chosen guests, actually gets to eat his remarkable gift. Since food and dinners are staples of Roman satire, could not this scene have afforded Juvenal an opportunity to take his satiric attack on Domitian even further? The obvious answer to this question is that the actual dinner scene is superfluous because the story Juvenal wanted to tell *has* been told. But with the information provided by a later historical account of a dinner at Domitian's we are in a position to know what an evening with a powerful host who hates his terrified "friends" could be like. Cassius Dio reports on Domitian's sadistic cat-and-mouse game at a particularly weird dinner party—an episode worthy of Juvenal's imagination and fully in the spirit of the satirist's description of Domitian's court, although the predominant color involved in Dio's account is not the paleness of terror mentioned in *Satire* 4 but its very opposite, the blackness of death. But to those among Dio's readers who know their Juvenal even this difference serves to emphasize the eerie atmosphere that characterizes Juvenal's evocation of Domitian's court. Here is Dio's account:

τὸ μὲν οὖν πλῆθος οὕτως τότε ἐδείπνισεν, αὐθις δὲ τοὺς πρώτους τῆς γερουσίας καὶ τῶν ἱππέων τόνδε τὸν τρόπον. οἶκον μελάντατον ἀπανταχόθεν ἕκ τε τῆς ὀροφῆς καὶ ἐκ τῶν τοίχων τοῦ τ' ἐδάφους παρασκευάσας, καὶ κλισίας ἐπ' αὐτοῦ τοῦ δαπέδου γυμνάς ὁμοίας ἐτοιμάσας, ἐσεκάλεσεν αὐτοὺς μόνους νυκτὸς ἄνευ τῶν ἀκολούθων. καὶ πρῶτον μὲν στήλην ταφροειδῆ ἐκάστῳ σφῶν παρέστησε, τό τε ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ἔχουσιν καὶ λυχνόχον μικρόν, οἷος ἐν τοῖς μνημείοις κρεμάννυται· ἔπειτα παῖδες εὐπρεπεῖς γυμνοί, μέλανι καὶ αὐτοὶ κεχρισμένοι, ἐσῆλθον ὥσπερ εἰδωλα, καὶ περιελθόντες αὐτοὺς μετ' ὀρχήσεώς τινος φοβεράς πρὸ ποδῶν ἰδρύθησαν· καὶ μετὰ τοῦτο ἀνθ' ὅσαπερ ἐν τοῖς ἐναγίσμασι καθαγίζεται, καὶ ἐκείνοις μέλανα ἐν σκεύεσιν ὁμοίοις προσηνέχθη, ὥστε καὶ φοβεῖσθαι καὶ τρέμειν καθ' ἕκαστον αὐτῶν πάντας, αἱ τε ὅσον οὐκ ἤδη σφαγῆσεσθαι προσδέχεσθαι, ἄλλως τε καὶ ὅτι παρά τε τῶν ἄλλων σιωπῇ πολλῇ ὥσπερ ἐν τεθνηκόσιν ἤδη ἦν, καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ Δομιτιανὸς πάντα ἕς τε θανάτους καὶ ἕς σφαγὰς φέροντα διελάλει. τέλος δὲ ἀφῆκε μὲν αὐτούς, προαπαλλάξας δὲ δὴ τοὺς οἰκέτας σφῶν τοὺς ἐν τοῖς προθύροις ἐστηκότας, δι' ἐτέρων τινῶν ἀγνώστων τοὺς μὲν ὀχήμασι τοὺς δὲ φορείοις παραδοὺς πολὺ πλεόν δέος αὐτοῖς ἐνέβαλε. ἄρτι δὲ ἕκαστός σφῶν οἶκαδε

ἐσεληλύθει καὶ τρόπον τινὰ ἀναπνεῖν ἤρχετο, καὶ αὐτῷ ἐσηγγέλθη ὅτι παρὰ τοῦ Αὐγούστου τις ἦκοι. προσδοκῶντων τε ἐκ τούτου τότε δὴ πάντως ἀπολεῖσθαι, ἐσεκόμισέ τις τὴν στήλην ἀργυρᾶν οὖσαν, εἴτ' ἄλλος ἄλλο τι καὶ ἕτερος ἕτερον τῶν σκευῶν τῶν ἐν τῷ δεῖπνῳ παρατεθέντων, πολυτελεστάτου τινὸς γένους πεποιημένα· καὶ τέλος ὁ παῖς ἐκεῖνος, τὸ δαιμόνιον ἐκάστω, λελουμένος τε καὶ κεκοσμημένος... καὶ οὕτω διὰ πάσης τῆς νυκτὸς φοβούμενοι τὰ δῶρα ἔλαβον.

(Cass. Dio 67.9.1–6)

At this time then he feasted the people in the way mentioned, but on one occasion he treated the highest-ranking senators and knights in the following manner. Having prepared a hall that appeared pitch-black from all sides, ceiling and walls and floor, and having readied bare couches of matching color on the naked floor, he invited them alone at night without their servants. First he placed next to each of them a block that looked like a gravestone. It bore the guest's name and had a small lamp of the kind that hangs in tombs. Then handsome naked boys, also painted black, came in like ghosts, walked around them in a kind of terrifying dance, and sat down at their feet. After this, all the things that belong to the rites of the dead were offered, everything black and in dishes of the same color, and served to them. As a result, each of them was scared and trembled and almost expected to be slaughtered at any moment—the more so because all the others kept a deep silence as if they already were among the dead and because Domitian himself discoursed only on subjects that referred to death and slaughter. At last he sent them away, having in advance removed their slaves, who had waited for them in the entrance hall. He handed them over to other servants whom they did not know, some to be put in carriages, some in litters, and so struck even greater fear into them. Scarcely had each of them reached his home and was beginning, so to speak, to breathe again when it was announced to him that somebody had come from the emperor. When, accordingly, they were now expecting to be killed after all, someone brought in the slab, which was made of silver; others in turn brought in the other things and the dishes that had been placed before them at the banquet, all made from the most precious materials. Finally, that same boy who had stood by each of them, their phantom, also [came in], now cleaned up and in elegant clothing. And so they received these gifts after having been mortally afraid the entire night.

Dinner with the emperor could indeed turn out to be fatal, as a number of examples from Roman history attest. This had been the case especially during the rule of Nero, whom Juvenal, as we saw, mentions as a “model” for Domitian.²⁸ But while Dio is interested in Domitian's

²⁸ Schubert (1998) 338–52 examines all passages in Juvenal's satires that deal with Nero. On dinner and death under Nero: Goddard (1994) 67–82; Stein-Hölkeskamp (2002) 3–28.

dinner story only for historical reasons and so reports an amazing episode from the past without showing much personal involvement, Juvenal's point is topical and, for that reason, far more urgent. Despite their differences, both authors demonstrate to us the extreme which absolute power could reach in the Roman empire. What could better illustrate the precariousness of existence in an imperial system than the combined force of Juvenal's fictitious story about Domitian's fish and Dio's factual account of Domitian's deathly banquet? The historian gives us an independent corroboration that the satirist has correctly and accurately taken the tyrant's measure.

While the imperial banquet is missing from *Satire 4*, *Satire 5* provides us with a kind of substitute, as it were, if not with a dinner conducted at so high a social level as Domitian's banquet would have been. Instead, we are present at the dinner party which a rich and powerful aristocrat, Virro, puts on for a number of guests whom he treats preferentially and for a client, Trebius, whom he treats contemptuously. Trebius is served inferior and almost inedible food and has to forego altogether some of the courses that are served to the others. Virro's perverted dinner degrades Trebius, with whom we side emotionally. Alert readers of *Satire 4* who turn to Juvenal's next composition cannot help but draw certain conclusions about Virro, as they are doubtless meant to do. Virro is "a petty tyrant, a miniature Domitian."²⁹ The juxtaposition of *Satire 4* and *Satire 5* with their common theme of food is a sly masterstroke on Juvenal's part with which to conclude his first published collection. Through the implied parallelism of Domitian and Virro and of their behavior and environment Juvenal hints that the *tempora saevitiae* that had obtained under Domitian are continuing, if not in the literal sense of bloodshed. But better times are not necessarily good times.

Satire 5, we may conclude, serves as a symbolic parallel to the poet's situation in society. Virro's client Trebius and the poet of satire in an imperial system are vulnerable to the power of those of higher rank. As such, *Satire 5* contrasts with Horace's gentle mockery of the inept Nasidienus' dinner (*Sat.* 2.8), a more benign variation on the same theme.³⁰ Juvenal's *Satire 7*, on the literary and social changes brought about by the ostensibly benign rule of a new emperor, continues to hint

²⁹ Braund (1996b) 306. See further Malamud (2001) 23–45 on Domitian and Statius.

³⁰ Cf. Rudd (1966) 213–23 on Hor. *Sat.* 2.8 and the brief comparison there with Juvenal's *Satire 5*.

at Juvenal's perspective toward imperial monarchy in its description of the precarious state of intellectuals, the very people who depend on and frequently champion independence of thought and freedom of speech. *Satire* 8 then rejects all aristocracy by denying nobility of birth the status as guarantor of true moral value (*virtus*). Although presented cautiously as an innocuous moral-philosophical disquisition, from a political perspective this satire indirectly questions the qualifications of aristocrats for political power and rejects Rome's ruling class. *Satire* 10, Juvenal's most profound work and one of his longest, is a philosophical exhortation on the futility of prayer, but it is also an indirect expression of political resignation. Ever since Samuel Johnson's adaptation, *Satire* 10 has carried the unofficial title "The Vanity of Human Wishes."³¹ Hidden in the original poem with its "cynical quietism" is also the vanity of political wishes on the part of those in the Roman empire who are excluded from the ranks of power.³²

Dryden and Juvenal Vindicated

As we have seen, Juvenal and Tacitus may be regarded as kindred spirits critical of the system of government which had replaced Rome's republic. Parallel to the substance of their condemnation of the imperial system is the rhetorical and stylistic sharpness with which they present their themes, notwithstanding the difference of the one writing in verse, the other in prose. Syme's assessment is perhaps the most ringing endorsement in English of both—appropriately, with an undertone of melancholia:

Tacitus and Juvenal could be regarded as parallel and coeval phenomena. Style, tone, and sentiments are comparable. Juvenal has point and concentration, command of rapid narrative and of pictorial evocation—and a dramatic power supremely manifested in scenes like the fall of Seianus or the demoniac energy of a debauch.

Remorseless preaching of the ancestral morality, denunciation of vice, and sloth, and foreigners—the national Roman spirit speaks with a fervour and a fury never known to the conquering Republic or to the pride of the Augustan Empire. It was now on the defensive, passionately insistent on

³¹ Johnson's adaptations of Juvenal's *Satire* 3 ("London") and *Satire* 10, together with manuscript variations and some other lines of Johnson's derived from Juvenal, are easily accessible in Winkler (2001) 209–33.

³² The words quoted are from Rudd (1966) 266.

ancient virtue and ancient heroism. Loud and perhaps over-loud in their protestations, Juvenal and Tacitus betray symptoms of defeat or insecurity. They are the last great names in the literature of the Romans.³³

Many decades before Syme the famous French scholar Gaston Boissier, a professor of Latin oratory, had written a book on opposition under the Roman emperors entitled *L'opposition sous les Césars*. He closed the last chapter of this book, "Les écrivains de l'opposition," with none other than Juvenal.³⁴ In recent scholarship the view of Juvenal that Dryden had voiced most forcefully and that Boissier and Syme restated may still be encountered:

One must surely conclude that the chief cause of his [sc. Juvenal's] restraint was prudence, or caution, or apprehension—at any rate some gradation on the scale of fear. . . . In the end he hit on a way of escape: he would simply ignore the passage of time. The last eighty years, or more, of Roman history would be treated as 'now'. Any example of crime, vice, or misfortune would be given a contemporary relevance. . . . as conditions [although improved after Domitian] depended so much on the character of a single man, one never knew when such things might recur. . . . And so he came to be regarded as the 'opposition satirist' *par excellence*.³⁵

Early in *Satire* 1, Juvenal, impassioned diagnostician of the ills of his time, voiced the indignant expostulation *difficile est saturam non scribere* ("it is difficult not to write satire," 1.30). With this he presented himself as acerbic critic of mankind's follies and vices. As such he still speaks to us with his unsurpassed wit and vividness. This makes him a classic, but an eternally modern one. To read him in the early twenty-first century, when questions of power and empire have resurfaced on a global level, is his—and also Dryden's—best vindication.

³³ Syme (1958) 500.

³⁴ Boissier (1937) 302–40, after a considerably shorter section on Tacitus (285–301) and preceding a brief conclusion (340–6). Boissier's book first appeared in 1875. He was elected to the Académie Française the following year.

³⁵ Rudd (1985) 80–1. Rudd's comments on Juvenal close with a quotation of Dryden's famous phrase.

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